

The Beginning of the End

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Mark chapter 13, verse 1. And he came out of the temple. As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Look, teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings. And Jesus said to him, Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when will these things be?

And what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished? And Jesus began to say to them, See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, I am he.

[1 : 10] And they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place. But the end is not yet.

For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places. There will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils. And you'll be beaten in synagogues. And you'll stand before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them.

And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say.

But say whatever is given you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death. And father is child.

[2 : 08] And children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end be saved.

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not 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 the house, or take anything out. Let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And last, for women who are pregnant, 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.

[3 : 09] And if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or look, there he is, do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise, perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

But be on your guard. I have told you all things before him. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and 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 clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

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

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. Verse 32, But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows.

[4 : 27] Not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard. Keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

It's like a man going on a journey when he leaves his home, puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore, stay awake. If you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

And what I say to you, I say to all, stay awake. God bless hearing, preaching of his word.

The ever-quotable reformer Martin Luther once said, even if I knew tomorrow the world would fall to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.

What would you do if you knew that tomorrow the world would end? If you knew that tomorrow Jesus would come riding on the clouds? Anyways, I don't think that's a hard question.

[5 : 39] Knowing what we would do would actually not be that hard to decide. We'd spend it with those we love. Thank God for the life we've been given. But what would you do if you knew that the world was passing away and knew Jesus would return soon, but you didn't know when?

This morning, we come to a hot passage in a lot of ways, designed, though, to help us understand this question. It's the longest teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

We did it all at once, just couldn't find a way to untangle it into different passages, different texts.

But that's not all the smart people agree.

It's the most difficult passage in the Gospel of Mark. So cut me some slack, all right? You know, I mean, churches are split on how they read this passage.

Denominations are formed by how they read this passage. I don't think it has to be that way. I will, as we walk through, present an interpretation of this passage, but I think there's room for several different interpretations in biblical faith.

[6 : 52] It's important, though, to remember the context. After leaving the temple, Jesus sits down with his disciples about what will happen next after he leaves the world.

Wonderfully, Jesus tells them that he will return again, but he doesn't tell them when. Now, along the way, in these 37 verses, he tells them things will happen, lots of things, many things will happen.

But what marks this passage more than anything else are not predictions or prophecies. What marks this passage more than anything else are not signs. What marks this passage more than anything else are all the commands, 19 commands and 37 verses.

Each of these commands discourage a preoccupation with the future. Instead, focus us on following Christ in the present. Do not be led astray. Be on guard. Stay awake.

Stay awake in a passage often spread out on timetables and used to decipher the signs of the end. The often overlooked but overwhelming emphasis is on faithfulness to Christ in the present.

[7 : 55] That's where we're going, James Edwards says. Mark 13 admonishes readers against attempts at constructing tables and deciphering signs. The premium for discipleship, according to Mark 13, is placed not on predicting the future but on faithfulness in the present, especially in trials, adversity, and suffering.

So in a word, where we're going is, be steadfast. Jesus is coming and all who follow must be ready when he returns. Be steadfast. Jesus is coming and all who follow must be ready when he returns. Now, threading through this text, these 37 verses are three important realities that should press us towards faithfulness in the present.

Those are going to form my points. The destruction of the temple, the suffering of the saints, and the return of the king. That's where we're going. First point is destruction of the temple. Destruction of the temple.

After much time teaching in the temple, Jesus leaves the temple for good. Look at verse 1. As he came out of the temple. Now, that's a very, that's just a prepositional phrase, but that's a very important demarcation for us.

[9 : 14] Jesus has been in the temple for quite some time, and as he came out, Jesus leaves the temple for good. And immediately, one of the disciples says, see what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings, you know?

And it's not surprising that they would comment on the temple. The temple was incredible. Herod's temple was one of the many wonders of the Roman world. It had been under construction for 46 days, John 2 tells us, and still was not done.

It's this massive facility, you know, five football fields long by three football fields wide. That's a lot, ladies. As you'll see tonight on the field, you know, the circumference was over a mile.

So walking around the temple and its surrounding courts was over a mile, built with these massive stones. Some of the ones they've, historians say 60 feet long.

Stones. It's quite a work, and much of it was overlaid with silver and gold. And so he comments, what wonderful stone. What wonderful buildings.

[10:26] Look at how Jesus responds, though. Do you see these buildings? They will not be left here, one stone upon another. Not a single one. Will not be overthrown. Disciples are taken back.

You know, it's like somebody standing in the middle of the National Mall in D.C., surrounded by the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Capitol, the White House.

Not one of these buildings is going to be standing. Disciples are not just struck at the power behind such a statement, but at what it must mean.

Then the disciples and Jesus leave Jerusalem. They go to the Mount of Olives. Now the Mount of Olives is right outside Jerusalem. It rises 150 feet above Jerusalem.

15 stories there with this massive temple gleaming in the sun. They finally get to ask Jesus their burning question. What are you talking about?

[11:25] What is going to happen? Look at verse 3. They say, or verse 4, tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?

I mean, they're asking, when will the temple be destroyed? When will these things be? When will this happen? When will no stone be left upon one another? But they're also assuming that when the temple's destroyed, everything's going down.

You know, I mean, it must be the end. I mean, this temple's so amazing. So it must be the end. So they're asking, what will be the sign when all these things are accomplished and the end takes place?

That's exactly the way Matthew renders it in Matthew 24. So they're asking, not merely when will the temple be destroyed, but when will the end come? Now, Jesus at first does not seem to answer that question.

If you look like right out, he says, he says, see that no one leads you astray. And he starts going through these different things. You know, Jesus doesn't tell them what they want. He doesn't tell them a day in a year.

[12:24] He doesn't tell them a time. He doesn't tell them when this temple's going to be destroyed. He talks about wars and rumors of wars and different things like that. But he does tell them it will be destroyed when they see the abomination of desolation.

Look in verse 14. He says, when you see this, so there's going to be all these things going around. You're going to hear these rumors. But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not be, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

The abomination of desolation. I mean, what in the world are you talking about, Jesus? You know, an abomination, just something disgusting and despicable. The house of God, just gross evil.

So what he's saying is there's going to be an abomination, and this is taken from Daniel. There's going to be an abomination, something despicable and gross in the temple that causes the temple to be desolated, right?

Causes the people to flee the temple. So there's going to be this, when you see this abomination of desolation, it's not meant to be like, well, you know, it's not merely going to happen in one moment, but the overflow, lots of different moments, all the people will abandon.

[13:34] The temple will be abandoned by the Jews. Now, first century Jews would have said this occurred in 167 B.C. When Antiochus entered Jerusalem, he killed, when he entered then, in 167, he killed 40,000 Jews and rededicated the temple to Zeus.

We talked a little bit about that along the way. He offered an unclean pig on the altar. Jews don't like pigs. Leading to all the Jews deserting the temple. So they said, this was fulfilled then.

That appears to be a fulfillment of Daniel 11, 31. Others say, it occurred in A.D. 70 when Titus rode into Jerusalem and wrecked havoc.

That is, what I think, is the most plausible interpretation. History tells us, Titus raised Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and the city was held hostage by him.

He crucified so many Jews He ran out of crosses. There was disease and famine, even cannibalism. Mothers eating their young to stay alive.

[14 : 48] So it seems, in 14 and following, Jesus is preparing them for this destruction in A.D. 70 that we know occurred 40 years later.

And so he says, don't stand, don't stand your ground. So contrary to what he says earlier, don't, don't stand your ground. Flee. You know, so he tells them to flee to the mountains like Jews had done in the past.

When something happened to Jerusalem, they fled to the mountains to hide out. He says, run along the housetop, sounds just like it was written about Jerusalem. Run along the housetop. The great tribulation in Jerusalem, unlike any Jerusalem had faced before.

D.A. Carson says this, great biblical theologian said, there have been greater numbers of death but never so high a percentage of a great city's population so thoroughly and so painfully exterminated. He's writing about A.D. 70. It's a big deal if you're studying biblical history. And so, so there's just, this great suffering that overtook this city and, and, and the historians say all the Christians left by A.D. 68.

[15 : 50] But most painful of all in this temple was knowing that this was not merely the workings of men but the judgment of God. The temple was this sacred place, the place where God and man communed together and yet the judgment of God falls in A.D. 70 and that's what Jesus is talking about.

But one of the things most often neglected when interpreting these verses is the context. It's not why, not merely why I think it was destroyed in A.D. 70 but it helps understand what is going on. Jesus has been confronting the religious leaders from the beginning. You remember that. Chapter 1, he's been confronting these guys in the synagogues and all along the way and then beginning in chapter 11, Jesus goes into the temple.

He immediately promises judgment. You remember that with the fig tree. He curses the fig tree and he tells them that's what's going to happen to the house of God because the house, it's meant to be a house of prayer for all nations. It's become a den of thieves. And so judgment is coming down. That's what he's saying and then he teaches in the temple all day Tuesday. He's teaching the temple all their questions coming at him. He's disproving all their accusation and then Jesus leaves the temple for good and promises it will be destroyed.

[17 : 02] What's going on? What are we supposed to see? Now right in Matthew's gospel, Jesus laments before leaving the temple.

He says, O Jerusalem, look at me, O Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sinned. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you are not willing.

See, your house is left to you desolate. What does this mean? Why is Jesus teaching it? Why is he emphasizing this to a Roman audience that's, this is, you know, who, Mark's writing this from Rome 8064.

Why is he emphasizing this? Because this is about to happen. Let the reader understand these things. I know this is a little heavy sledding, but what is Jesus? What's all this mean? What is he trying to teach us?

Well, the old covenant is passing away. The old order is passing away. The old way of coming to God through priests and sacrifices and animal blood is coming to an end.

[18 : 02] That's why the temple must be destroyed. The new way is dawning. Tomorrow in Jesus' day, on Thursday, on the night of the Passover, when we celebrate the Passover, the Passover lamb, and they all slay the Passover lamb and hide under his blood instead of that blood, Jesus said, the new, this is the blood, the new covenant in my blood.

And so that's what's going on. What's this mean? The dwelling place of God is no longer in a temple made with bricks and mortar. The dwelling place of God with man is in Jesus Christ.

That's what's going on from a redemptive historical context and this verse. In Jesus, we commune with God. In Jesus, we have a sacrifice to atone for ourselves.

In Jesus, we have reconciliation. That's why, you remember Jesus said, the woman at the well, he said, he said, very soon, you're not going to worship on this mountain or that mountain. Those who

worship me will worship me in spirit and truth.

They won't need to go to no mountain. There'll be no sacred space because those who worship me will worship me through my spirit. That's incredible.

[19 : 10] What Jesus is saying is I'm the new temple. Mark's been taking great pains to say that to us. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the way to God.

So, you know, we get in our eschatology positions. Let's not miss that. In a sermon once preached by Dick Lucas, he recounted the imaginary conversation between an early Christian and his neighbor in Rome.

maybe somebody read the Gospel of Mark. Neighbor says, ah, I hear you're religious. Great. Religion is a good thing.

Where is your temple or your holy place? Because he said, we don't have a temple. Jesus is our temple. No temple, but where do your priests do their work and do their rituals and things?

He said, we don't have a priest to mediate the presence of God. Jesus is our priest. No priest, but where do you offer your sacrifices to acquire favor with your God?

[20 : 23] We don't need a sacrifice. Jesus is our sacrifice. What kind of religion is this? No religion at all. that's what's going on here.

Jesus is turning the tables on all that came before because a new day is dawning in him. the old is gone.

The new has come. That's what Jesus is saying and Mark is trying to underline for us. Point two, the suffering of the saints. aside from predicting the destruction of the temple and promising the return, the vast majority of this just, in my opinion, hangs on, well, not just my opinion, hangs on one theme, suffering.

Some of the suffering is specific to the destruction of the temple. Some of it is just before his return, but much of it seems to be wonderfully indistinct.

Why? Jesus is trying to say what he said lots of times. That to be a Christian is to be someone who continually suffers.

[21 : 50] The days between Jesus' ascension and his return are days when Christians are out of power and vulnerable to being led astray by the world, the flesh, and the devil. So, Jesus warns us.

Much of this passage, these commands, this is what I'm going to unpack in a few moments. He warns us, firstly, to be alert. So, point A, be alert. You know, one of the marks of this age is false teaching.

Look in verse 5. Jesus says, see that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, I am he, and they will lead you astray. Now, you've got to consider the audience. These are his four, these are the top four.

These are his top four disciples, and he says, see that no one says that they are me, and you get confused. You know, they're like, we've been hanging out for three years, you know, do you not trust me, you know, but what he's saying is they've got to watch out because many false Christs will come, people think he's a real thing, and lead many astray.

I just find that so great, but they must watch out. Later, Jesus warns in verse 21, if anyone says to you, look, here's the Christ, or look, there he is, do not believe it, for false Christs and false prophets will arise and form many signs and wonders to lead many astray.

[23 : 05] Jesus is warning that one of the marks of this age is false teaching and false prophets, so we must be alert. Now, we live in a day of lots of fake news and misinformation designed to deceive.

That wasn't meant to be a political statement, but designed to deceive unless you're living under a rock. You likely notice our county hit the big news this past couple weeks. Regardless of whether you believe the school board should or should not have banned the Holocaust comic Moss, the initial blurbs were intentionally misleading.

Rural county of Tennessee is denying the Holocaust, you know. Oh, the irony of being lectured by our culture on how to teach history. But that's the way it is, right?

Misinformation. Fake news. Propaganda. The communist empires had a minister of propaganda. Well, the enemy does too.

And he is at work. That's what Jesus is saying. Watch out for false teaching, false prophets. In so many ways, false teaching, scripture warns us, comes not, the most dangerous form comes not from without, but from within.

[24 : 20] Comes from within our own camp. 2 Timothy 4, 3-4, what I mean by that, those who confess Jesus Christ. He says, for the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

Will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. I'm not going to name drop. There's a whole lot of preachers, quote unquote, repackaging the values of our culture and slapping the name of Jesus on it.

Watch out. Watch out. Yeah. It's not just at the seedy stores where you're being taught the wrong thing.

it's at the Christian stores. But it's also in so many other things we see in our culture right now. And I, you know, this is where I don't want to veer off, but naturalism, explaining the world and all that there is through natural causes. That's an anti-God system.

[25 : 30] Materialism, spreading the belief that this world and this life is all there is. The new definition of tolerance. Tolerance used to mean I can allow you to believe and practice something I disagree with. We can be friends.

It's cool. Now tolerance means I must approve, accept, and encourage you in believing and practicing something I disagree with. That's not tolerance. What am I tolerating there?

Nothing. Critical theory. You know, explaining history and society and categories of power and oppression between male and female, straight and queer, white and black and so on.

The Bible does not endorse these categories and we must be very dangerous, are very careful. I think they're dangerous. So what's the point? The point of all this is the posture of a Christian in this age must be alertness.

Watch out. Be like the Berean. Test everything. Hold fast to what's true from this pulpit or any other pulpit. or book or whatever. Subpoint B, be steadfast.

[26 : 33] Another mark of these days is worldwide turmoil and opposition. So be steadfast. Be steadfast. Look at verse 7. You know, these are the verses we often think about when we hear about this passage.

You know, you hear of wars and rumors of wars and you hear of nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom and earthquakes and there's famines and every generation reads that and then they read the newspaper.

Oh my goodness! The Lord is coming! We've been doing it for 2,000 years reading it the same way and thinking it's coming the next day for us. These things are not, these are marks of the end day, end times, the last days.

It's just the fact of life. Men, women get together in lots of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed. Listen to what Jesus said. Look in verse 7b.

He says, this must take place. That's a verb of divine necessity.

[27 : 39] What Jesus is saying, all the worldwide turmoil, you know what? All the suffering that results is according to the plan of God. It must take place.

So the worldwide turmoil and then there's opposition. Look in verse 9. Be on your guard. They'll deliver you over to counsel. You'll be beaten in synagogues and you'll stand for governors and kings.

Look in verse 12. Brother will deliver over brother to death. The father is child. Children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You'll be hated by all for my name's sake. He's helping us see we're not living in a world that's neutral to God.

We're living in a world that they drop the mask that is opposed to God. So Jesus says, be on your guard. Watch out. You'll be handed over to counsel, beaten, stand trial.

You'll be hated. Did you notice the repetition of the word handed over? Now it's rendered different ways in this text but it's rendered three times in verse 9, 11, and 12.

[28 : 39] You'll be handed over. Now Jesus promised that he will be handed over three times before this. But here he warns all who follow him will be handed over as well.

John the Baptist has already been handed over. Same word. 1.14. Now after Jesus is handed over all who follow him will be handed over and persecuted some by their own family. Indeed 2 Timothy 3 all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

But don't be afraid. Spirit. I'll tell you what to say. Don't be surprised.

Verse 23 I'm telling you these things beforehand. Don't think it's strange when you encounter fiery trials and troubles. Most of all don't forget the promise.

Look at verse 13. He says but the one who endures to the end will be saved. The one who endures to the end. The one who is steadfast to the end will be saved.

[29 : 39] What a promise! All who is steadfast to the end will be saved. James Edwards again he says this promise is a supreme comfort in the midst of trials. Believers are not expected to do what they cannot do prevail.

But to do the one thing that they can do in every crisis to endure and be steadfast. Now that word steadfast literally means to remain under. It's a combination of two words in the Greek remain under.

So all you gotta do is just remain under it. You know the one who wins is the last man standing. That's the game the Lord is playing because this world has gone crazy and you just gotta be the last man.

Can you imagine reading these words in AD 64? Right before the jaws of lions clamped down on your neck. That's what was going on in AD 64. Nero was about to go wild and light you up to light up his dinner parties in the backyard.

That's what's going on. Can you imagine reading this? Even if it takes the blood from my veins I'll be saved. That's what's going on.

[30 : 44] This teaching must be one of the reasons the disciples face suffering and persecution so commonly in the book of Acts. The commentary on Mark 13 is the book of Acts.

The disciples aren't surprised when they suffer they're surprised when they don't. Suffering and persecution of course it's coming. We follow a crucified Messiah in case you forgot. Paul and Silas in the prison in Philippi they're not crying.

They're not lobbying for a release. They're singing. Oh man. That'll preach. You know that's the way we should respond when the world reviles us and utters unclean and unkind things about us false things about us we should laugh and sing.

blessed to be counted worthy to follow Jesus Christ in that way. That's what's coming. Don't think it's strange. You're going to suffer persecution.

Now persecution is not when people don't like you for being you. Don't be a twerp and blame Jesus. You know I mean that's that's not persecution.

[31 : 56] okay. If you're weird that's your thing. Don't bring Jesus into that. But persecution is when people hate you and oppose you because of what you believe and stand for.

Right now persecution happened all over the world. Setting up cameras outside meeting rooms in China last week to capture the people that come to assemble. Why?

Because they confess the name of Jesus Christ. A group of people we're not worthy or I should say I'm not worthy to stand in the same room with. Are we experiencing persecution?

I think we all do to some degree when we're told to keep our beliefs to ourself at the Thanksgiving dinner table or around the water cooler or wherever. But we may experience it in larger more systematic ways in the future.

That's what I think is in this text. We've experienced tremendous freedom to worship God and serve God however we like in this country. I thank God for it. Thank God for America. We're seeing the rise of a culture eager to take away someone's freedom of speech if it doesn't fall in line.

[33 : 07] It may very well lead to persecution for Christians and churches in America who call sin, sin and proclaim Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. If it comes let's not pull our hair out.

It's what was promised. Jesus told us these things beforehand so that we wouldn't. Point three or sub point C be focused.

Sorry that was getting me confused. Sub point C be focused. This flows quite naturally. The calmness is because our mission does not reside in this world.

A final mark of these last days is mission. Do you notice? Do you notice it? Why are we delivered over and forced to stand before governors and kings? Look at verse 9. Why are we to do that?

To bear witness. Why is this going on? So that we can bear witness. It's like Paul went all the way to Rome to proclaim Jesus Christ.

[34 : 16] Verse 10 And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. So yes these days are days of false teaching worldwide turmoil opposition and suffering but these are also the days when the gospel must be proclaimed.

That's our mission. This is the gospel age. This is the church age. The old is gone. The new has come. This is when forgiveness of sins reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ must be

proclaimed to everyone under heaven.

That's why we must not let the mission become turning into or must not turn into creating a Christian nation. That's why we must not let the mission turn into creating a safe place for us to ride out the storm to avoid the trouble.

That's not the mission. That is not what Jesus has entrusted to us to carry to the ends of the earth. It's to preach the gospel and make disciples so we don't pull ourselves out of the world.

We remain in it so that we can win many of the world to Jesus. I'm so thankful that people stood in the gap for me because if the end is coming then the days of repentance are coming to an end very soon and we have the only thing that will matter on that day.

[35 : 43] Be steadfast. Jesus is coming. All who follow him must be ready when he returns. Point three, the return of the king. Where so many of the signs of this age are unclear there's a day coming that all will see the return of the king.

This is amazing. Look in verse 24 but after these days after that tribulation the sun will be dark and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from the heavens and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. So just this apocalyptic moment you know the sun's dark and the moon will not give all its light the stars will fall from the heaven.

What is going on? The reader of the Old Testament knows this is the day of the Lord. That's what Mark is saying. This is what Jesus is saying. This is the day of the Lord. This is the day Joel promised and so many others promised.

Joel 2 The earth quakes before them the heavens tremble the sun and the moon will darken the stars withdraw their shining the Lord utters his voice for his camp is exceedingly great he who executes his word is powerful for the day of the Lord is great and very awesome who can endure it? It's a great and terrible day the shaking the darkness the stars falling but into this worldwide turmoil and upheaval Jesus Christ comes riding on the clouds in great power and glory look in verse 26 and they will see the son of man there's so many signs we can't see but they will see the son of man coming in the clouds with great power power and glory Jesus has come as a suffering servant but Jesus will come again as the conquering king he will return as the one promised the son of David and Daniel 7 to him will be given the dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples and nations and languages shall serve him forever and ever and it's a day of judgment that's what the second you know I did not come to condemn the world but Jesus could have added I'm coming back though to do it it's a terrible day it's a terrible day for sinners look in verse 27 though but then he will send out his angels and gather his elect from the four winds from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heaven like a mother gathering her children into the bathroom because a tornado is about to come over the house

[38 : 11] Jesus says those people whose names are written in the book of life those who have not refused me but have turned from everything to embrace me those I'll gather those are the ones it's staggering if you trust in Jesus Christ Jesus Christ knows exactly where you are he knows exactly who you are and he says he's coming for you he's going to gather you under his wings before he unleashes the terror of judgment he begs a question are you sure that you're sure that you're sure that your name is written in the book of life are you have you turned from your sins in Jesus Christ you know we're listening singing that song not in me you know no list of sins you know

I just felt like I got this picture came to my mind I was singing this song you know like the promise of the gospel is not that if you were drunk that you put on some abstinence that's not the promise of the gospel that's not the gospel or if you're a porn addict that you start pursuing purity or something like that if you're a liar that you start not lying or that you're anger that you start kind of tucking away and being more so the promise of the gospel is that all those doors are dead ends but there's a door at the end that leads to Jesus Christ that's the door I open up to you today because the Lord is coming and all who refuse him he will not come for salvation he will come for wrath and you must be ready to face him so come to him all you are weary and heavy laden he will give you the rest for your soul and the salvation you so desperately need so we don't lose heart our king is coming we set our hope fully on the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ we wait for our blessed hope the appearing of our great God and Savior

Jesus Christ when will he come we don't know look at verse 32 but concerning the day or that hour no one knows not even the angels in heaven nor the son but only the father the angels don't know the son doesn't know somehow in the mystery of his incarnation he did not hold on to that prerogative of God which people wrestle with like crazy but only the father knows so what is he

saying we shouldn't try to figure it out interestingly Jesus tells us the temple will be destroyed in AD 70 and he tells us he will return in such a way that all will know but all the other signs are pretty much unclear why so we'd live in the moment for Jesus Christ in anticipation of his return and so we stay awake that final command verse 33 be on your guard keep awake for you do not know when the time will come tells us it's a parable you know it's kind of like a man who has a house and he leaves the house and he leaves the guys working doing their work and he's going to come back and they don't know whether it's going to be the evening or midnight or when the rooster crows are in the morning the emphasis is we're the ones waiting on the master and we're supposed to be waiting on the job so be steadfast

Jesus is coming all who follow him must be ready when he returns you know on a sunny day in May 1780 the Connecticut House of Representatives was in session the delegates were doing their work in the natural light of the day then suddenly something happened that no one expected right in the middle of the debate there was an eclipse of the sun they didn't have people watching this all the time so that we ran outside to see it there was an eclipse of the sun the delegates found themselves suddenly in darkness some delegates immediately thought he's here you know the Lord's here and a great clamor broke out people wanted to adjourn people wanted to pray people wanted to check on their families see they didn't disappear you know people wanted to get ready for the coming of the Lord but the speaker of the session had another idea he rose and spoke in wisdom good faith he said we're all upset about the darkness and some of us are afraid but the day of the Lord is either approaching or it's not if it's not there's no cause for adjournment and if the Lord is returning I for one choose to be found doing my duty I therefore ask that candles be brought in I think that's the point of this passage be steadfast Jesus is coming all who follow must be ready when he returns perhaps Luther's right plant an apple tree no matter what tomorrow brings may God help us Father in heaven we thank you we praise you we worship you we want to receive these commands from you we thank you for how soberly they tell us that following following Christ has a cost we thank you Father that they also tell us that following Christ is filled with an unshakable hope because our

[44 : 33] King knows our name written our names on the palm of his hand and he will return to bring us home we thank you and we praise you in Jesus name Amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com who Thank you.