

# And Then the End Shall Come

by Billy Strachan

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*Billy Strachan's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding biblical prophecy and the signs of the end times as taught by Jesus, urging believers to remain vigilant and faithful.*

**Duration:** 1:09:36

**Scripture:** Psalm 94:12-13, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 24:14-15, Romans 11:25-26

**Topics:** "End Times"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power of proclamation and encourages the audience to take control of their destiny. He shares a personal experience of being reminded by God to prioritize spiritual nourishment over worldly tasks. The preacher also discusses his ministry of reaching the unreached and teaching the untold, which he believes aligns with God's purposes. He then focuses on the importance of being instructed and taught by God's law, referencing Psalm 94:12-13. The sermon concludes with an invitation for the audience to choose to be instructed by God and be preserved in the midst of coming judgments.

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## Transcript

I was blessed by what was said about the power of proclamation. I hope we can convince you because it can change your life. Our young brother here testified and we could add a hundred testimonies to that effect.

So don't sit there and mope when things are going wrong but realize that in a certain sense your destiny is in your hands. Tonight Ruth and I are going to make a proclamation from Psalm 94 verses 12 and 13 taken from the New King James with slight variations. Psalm 94 and I chose this because I believe it really applies to the message that God has given me for tonight.

Blessed is the man whom you instruct, O Lord, and teach out of your law, that you may give him relief from the days of adversity until the pit is dug for the wicked. Do you realize that God is digging a pit for the wicked? And you don't want to fall into that pit, do you? You want to be amongst those who are preserved by the grace of God. Well the condition stated there is that you let God instruct you and teach you out of his law.

And that's what I'm seeking to do tonight. So we're going to say it once more and the third time we'll give you the privilege. Do you think you can learn it well enough to say it with us? I think you can, you're

intelligent Lord.

This is just for us alone and the third time. Blessed is the man whom you instruct, O Lord, and teach out of your law, that you may give him relief from the days of adversity until the pit is dug for the wicked. Now will you make up your mind you're going to be that man or that woman here tonight? You're going to let God instruct you and teach you that he may keep you safe in the midst of the judgments that are coming on the earth.

Are you ready? Blessed is the man whom you instruct, O Lord, and teach out of your law, that you may give him relief from the days of adversity until the pit is dug for the wicked. Amen. Now I have been associated with the Pentecost movement for 51 years and I could say basically I think I've seen everything.

I've actually never seen anybody hanging from the chandeliers but short of that I think I've seen it all. And I thank God for the Pentecost movement because I owe to them my knowledge of the new birth of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and of divine healing. But there was a period in the Pentecostal movement when when you went to church and you parked your car in the parking lot you could safely leave your mind in the car because you wouldn't need it in the church.

Thank God those days are over and we do need our minds in church. Jesus said the first and the great commandment is thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, thy soul, thy mind and thy strength. So your mind has got a part to play in your love for God and tonight you're going to need your mind.

Take the fetters off, be alert, concentrate and cooperate with me because I'm going to bring you a message which I could easily take a week to deliver. But I'm going to seek to go it in this one evening. Yesterday we spoke about a certain prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy 18 verses 18 and 19 where God said to Moses I will raise up for them, that's Israel, a prophet like you from among their brethren and will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him and it shall be that whosoever will not hear my words which he speaks in my name I will require it of him.

Now the New Testament identifies that prophet like Moses as Jesus and I did produce a little book once which isn't here called a prophet like Moses in which I pointed out more than 20 specific ways in which Jesus was like Moses. But we'll not go into that. I merely want to point out to you that God says if you don't hear the words that that prophet speaks to you, God is going to require it of you.

In other words it's not an option, it's important for your spiritual well-being. Many years ago in fact I know when it was because I know where I was in 1948 I read some words by a Jewish believer of that period whose name was Meyer Coleman. He was a member of the Executive Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States and I've discovered that words spoken in the Holy Spirit never die.

And all I read was this, that if you want to understand biblical prophecy it's like having the portions of a skeleton in front of you and being given the task of assembling them correctly. And he said if you want to do that there's one part of the skeleton that you must begin with and that is the spine. You put the spine in place you'll soon be able to assemble the other parts of the skeleton around it.

And what I'm going to speak to you tonight I'm going to deal with the theme of the spine of biblical prophecy. If you can get this right then you can go on to study other prophecies and have something to fit them into. This spine is the prophetic discourse that Jesus gave on the Mount of Olives in the last week of

his earthly ministry.

And it's so important that it's recorded in three Gospels. In Matthew chapter 24, in Mark chapter 13, and in Luke chapter 21. And all three versions differ slightly.

To me it's as if for instance there were here tonight three television cameras all recording my message but each one of them from a specific viewpoint so that there would be a difference in the viewpoint. And in order to understand all that Jesus had to say we need to put together the three chapters. Matthew 24 Mark 13 and Luke 21.

Now I'm not going to attempt that here tonight. Basically I'm going to focus on Matthew 24 but I'm going to take a few references from Luke 21. So we'll turn now to Matthew 24.

If you have your Bible you'll find it helpful to have it open. Also if you have enough fingers you'll find it helpful to keep a finger in Luke 21 because we'll be going there from time to time. And if that isn't comfortable well just relax and take as much as you can get.

Matthew 24 begins with a statement that Jesus made to his disciples. He was in the temple with them and they were apparently trying to impress him with the tremendous buildings and artistic work of the temple. The temple was the pride of the Jewish nation.

It was a masterpiece of construction. It was the center of their national life and it was the mark of their unique relationship with the one true God. So I imagine that the disciples expected Jesus to be very impressed but he wasn't.

In fact the reply that he made must have been like a blow in the solar plexus to them. If you aren't familiar with Jewish thinking I think you can hardly realize the impact this comment must have had on them. But in the light of the impact we understand the questions that they asked later.

So I'll read the first two verses. Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them do you not see all these things? Assuredly I say to you not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down.

In other words this whole building is going to be totally destroyed. I don't think we can imagine how shocked the disciples must have been. How could such a thing happen? And I think in their minds they concluded that if that really was going to happen it would mark the close of the age.

And so they asked two questions of Jesus related to this. Jesus and the disciples then went east from the temple area across the valley of the Kidron and up onto the Mount of Olives. And I imagine they sat in a place that's very familiar to me and they were actually able to look down on the buildings of the temple while he continued his discourse.

We're going to read therefore verse three. Now as he sat on the Mount of Olives the disciples came to him privately saying tell us when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age. You see apparently they concluded that if the temple was to be destroyed it would mark the end of the age.

They were wrong but that explains why they asked these questions. And notice they asked two questions. When will these things be? That is the destruction of the temple and what will be the sign of your coming,

your coming back and of the end of the age.

Now Jesus answered both questions but the answers recorded are not found in the same gospel. The answer to the first question when will the destruction of the temple take place is recorded in Luke 21. So keep your finger in Matthew 24 and turn to Luke 21 and I'm not going to read all the introduction there.

But in verses 20 through 24 Jesus answers the question when will the temple be destroyed. Historically we know the answer is in 70 AD. That is within less than one generation of the time when Jesus was speaking.

This is what he says. But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies then know that its desolation is near. So that's the sign when the temple will be destroyed.

Now this happened in 70 AD. The and were preparing to attack it. And then Trajan was elected or appointed Emperor of the Roman Empire and he had to go to Rome to take up his place.

And so temporarily the siege was lifted. The Roman armies withdrew. But under Titus who was the son-in-law or the follower of Trajan.

The armies returned again laid siege. And this time did not raise the siege until the whole city had been destroyed. So Jesus said when you see Jerusalem surrounded with armies know that its desolation is near.

Then he said let those in Judea flee to the mountains. Let those who are in the midst of her depart and let not those who are in the country enter her. Now that could not have been possible if it had not been that temporarily the siege was lifted.

And so those disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem who acknowledged Jesus as the Prophet gave heed to his words obeyed what he said. They seized the opportunity to escape out of Jerusalem and they went east of the Jordan to a place on the east side of the Jordan and found refuge there. In this way they saved their lives.

I want to point out to you how important it is to give heed to the prophetic words of Jesus. Our lives may actually depend on it. I believe we're coming into a period when that will be true again.

Then as I've said the Roman armies returned laid siege to the city and did not raise the siege until the whole city was destroyed and at least a million and a half Jews either perished or were sold into slavery throughout the Roman Empire. And Jesus speaks about this in Luke 21 verse 22. For these are the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Written where? Written in the Old Testament prophets. So Jesus said now these prophecies are coming into fulfillment. We won't turn there but if you want one particular prophecy that contains an overall picture of this situation you'll find it in Leviticus chapter 26.

And notice they are days of vengeance. Whose vengeance? God's vengeance on a disobedient nation. It's very important we bear in mind that God does take vengeance when his time comes.

He's a God of mercy but he's also a God of justice. And then Jesus gave a warning but woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days for there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. What land? When it says in the land, the land of Israel.

Wrath upon this people. What people? The Jewish people. All those words were exactly fulfilled.

Not metaphorically remember but exactly. And then it says what will happen to the Jewish people. Verse 24 they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations.

And in the long run they were led captive into at least 100 nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. You know what we mean by Gentiles.

A lot of people don't. It means those who are not Jews. Heathen are those who are not Christians but Gentiles are those who are not Jews.

I've had this problem because in Germany and in other countries they only have one word for both and so you have to stop and explain. But in English we're blessed with accurate words for both. But you have to know a Gentile is somebody who is not a Jew.

And Jesus said Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles. The word trample indicates that it's really out of divine order. Jerusalem is the capital of the Jewish nation.

Both then and now. And for Gentiles to be dominating Jerusalem is an indication that things are not the way they ought to be. Doesn't mean that it won't happen but it happens because the Jewish people have missed their destiny.

And it's very interesting as a matter of history. I've been associated with Jerusalem since 1942 and basically Jerusalem flourishes when it's under Jewish control and languishes when it's under Gentile control. And you can trace that more or less through its history for nearly 2,000 years.

But whenever it speaks about the judgment of God on the Jewish people and their scattering. You always find in the Bible some word like until. It's not permanent, it's not forever, there will be an end.

And here Jesus says until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. I understand the times of the Gentiles to mean the period in which Gentile nations are ruling where Israel should be ruling. And if so they began with Nebuchadnezzar and they continued until when.

Well 1948 a Jewish state came into being after nearly 2,000 years. I was an eyewitness, I was there when it happened and it was a miracle. I say that without misusing words.

About 700,000 Jews were surrounded by about 40 million Arabs. Well armed and well equipped and the Jews had virtually no military equipment. But the state of Israel survived.

Why? Because God intended it to survive. And what God intends will happen. That's good news because it concerns us.

Then in 1967, one of the most crucial dates in this century, in the Six-Day War, the old city of Jerusalem, which was the part that Jesus was familiar with, was liberated by the Jews from Muslim domination. But bear in mind the most significant and sacred spot in all of Jerusalem, the temple area, is still dominated by Muslims, by Arabs. So it's like the hands of the clock are just showing one minute before midnight.

But we haven't come to midnight. Then Jesus goes on, and this is very important, immediately after that statement, in Luke 21 verse 25. There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, and on the earth.

Distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

In other words, the liberation of Jerusalem from Gentile domination is very close to the return of the Lord in glory. It's one of the great indications that we are very near to the time of the Lord's return. All right, that's the answer to question number one.

When will these things happen? And Jesus gave a clear, specific, prophetic answer, which has been fully vindicated by subsequent history. Now we'll go back to Matthew 24 and we look at the next question. What will be the sign of your coming, coming back, and at the end of the age? And in the words that follow, Jesus gave them a number of signs, plural.

But it's several verses before we come to the sign. But Jesus did give a specific answer to a specific question. What will be the sign of your coming back? First of all in verses four and five Jesus warns his disciples, that means you and me today if we are disciples, against being deceived.

And if you study the revelation of Scripture concerning the end time, the period in which we are living, the greatest single danger that threatens us is deception. And anybody who is not on guard against being deceived, in my opinion, is certain to be deceived. Because the warnings against deception are more frequent than any other warnings.

Take heed, Jesus said, that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ, that's the Messiah, and will deceive many. You need to bear in mind, if you don't know it, that Christ is from the Greek word Christos, which corresponds to the Hebrew word Mashiach, Messiah.

So whether we say Messiah or Christ, we're saying the anointed one. I find lots of Christians don't know that, and most Jews have no idea whatever. But when we say about Jesus Christ, we're saying Jesus the Messiah.

Now again, the words of Jesus have been accurately fulfilled. Since that time about 40 false messiahs have come to the Jewish people, and all of them have been received by some of them. One of the most famous was Bar Kochba in the year 130, who raised up a rebellion against the Roman armies, was ultimately defeated and killed.

There was also Sabbati Zvi in the 17th century, who claimed to be a Messiah, led hundreds of thousands of Jewish people to the area of Palestine, was taken by the Arabs and converted to Islam. But I mean hundreds of thousands of people had put their faith in him as Messiah. It was in the year 1666, and at that time people believed that somehow this was a magical year.

This number 1666 was going to indicate that something very exciting and special was going to happen. Nowadays there's a kind of similar tradition or attitude toward the year 2000. But I think we need to be cautious, because I don't believe that God counts by the Gregorian calendar.

He has his own calendar which is in the Bible, and he has never departed from it. So I praise God for the concept of bringing the gospel everywhere and to everyone by the year 2000, but for me there's nothing magical in the year 2000. All right, now in the answer that Jesus gives, there is a key word which we need to pick out, and it's the word then, which occurs nine times in the original text.

In other words, what we are presented with is a series of developments that follow one after the other. Then, then, and then. Now we'll go on with Matthew 24 verse 6. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars.

See that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Now Jesus said throughout this age certain things will regularly take place. There'll be wars and rumors of wars, and his words have been exactly fulfilled.

But he said don't take those as being necessarily an indication that the age is about to end. Then in verse 7 he moves on to something different, which he calls the birth pangs. But I just want to point out that in Luke 21 verses 9 and 10, there's a there's a break in the discourse, which is very important.

So you compare Luke 21 verse 9 and 10. Jesus said, but when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified, for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately. That's the same teaching.

But this text adds, then he said to them, nation will rise against nation. In other words, there's a break between Matthew 24 verse 6 and Matthew 24 verse 7. Verse 7, as you will see, leads us into the period of the birth pangs. I'll read the words and then comment on them.

Verse 7, for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows, labor pains, or birth pangs. So the labor pains begin in Matthew 24 verse 7. If there are labor pains, there's going to be something born.

What is going to be born? My answer is, the kingdom of God on earth. But it will not come without a birth. The kingdom of God never comes without a birth.

Jesus says, unless an individual is born again, he cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. What is true of the individual is true of the whole world. It will take a birth to bring the kingdom of God to earth.

It's not going to be organized. It's not going to come as a political process. It's going to come by a sovereign intervention of God corresponding to a birth.

But we all know that before a birth takes place, there are labor pains or birth pains. Now I've never been involved in this experience, but one understands that it's not enjoyable. It's a time of pressure, of pain, and a time when one could say, well get me out of this.

Let's come to the end of it. But people tolerate it because they want the baby. You understand? If you want a baby, you have to go through birth pains.

There's no other way. So here we're faced with the question, do we want the baby? In other words, do we want the kingdom of God to come on earth? If we do, let's be realistic and say we'll endure the birth pains, because it cannot come any other way. Now Jesus lists the birth pains.

Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. Now some texts don't put in pestilences, but the word is found in the corresponding version in Luke 21.

So it's there. So what are the birth pains? Nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom. I would say great world wars.

And one of the significant things about the 20th century is it's the first time we've ever used the phrase world war. In this century there have been two world wars. One in 1914 and one in 1939.

And I have survived both. But before this century you couldn't have a world war, because the means of communication and travel did not make it possible. Humanity has to come to a certain condition worldwide before you can have a world war.

And I think one of the most significant features of our century is world war. Never was that phrase used in any previous century. Now the words that Jesus uses are particularly significant at the present time.

For he says nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Let's take kingdom against kingdom first and say as I understand it this means political wars. Wars that are fought to establish an empire, a dominion, some kind of political setup.

But what about nation against nation? To me this is extremely significant today, because the Greek word for nation is ethnos. From which we get the word ethnic. So Jesus says there will be ethnic wars.

And we just look across the world today and what do we see? In place after place after place, ethnic wars. Yugoslavia is one particular example, but far from being the only one. And there are ethnic conflicts within nations.

Take particularly the United States. There are many different ethnic groups which find it very hard to live in peace side by side. In other words the expression of ethnicity is a particular feature of the close of this age.

And then it says there will be famines and they estimate 40 million people perish every year as a result of malnutrition and starvation. Famines and pestilences and pestilence always follows famine, because the physical resistance of humanity is broken down by starvation. And then it says earthquakes in various places.

Statistically the number of earthquakes is steadily increasing in the days in which we live. Then Jesus says all these are the beginning of sorrows. They're not the end, they're not the birth.

But they're the indications that the birth is soon coming. And then we have the first then in verse 9. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. Now there's an important question here.

To whom is Jesus referring when he says you? I'll answer you in what is not good grammar. You is us. It refers to Christians.

Have you adjusted your thinking to that? Now you might say well in Britain it isn't happening or in the United States. But in many parts of the world this is already happening. In China it's happened in the Soviet Union.

It's happening in Muslim nations and other places. But Jesus says it's going to happen worldwide. I want to read that again.

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. This is Christians. People who are hated for the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus.

And then in verse 10 the second then. And then many will be offended and will betray one another and will hate one another. Many who? Many Christians.

They'll give up their faith because the pressures are too great. And in order to save their own lives they will betray their fellow believers. Again there are many many examples of this in nations such as China and what was the Soviet Union and in other places.

It is happening. I believe it's going to happen on a larger scale. Verse 11 then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

I believe that is happening. My personal opinion is that the church is riddled with false prophets. And the tragic thing is that most of God's people can't discern between the true and the false.

But apart from that every cult is the product of a false prophet. And there are more cults in the world than we can count. And again it really behoves us to heed the warning of Jesus.

Take care that no one deceives you. That's not an idle warning. It's very very urgent.

And then in verse 12 because lawlessness will abound the love of many will grow cold. For those of you that are somewhat younger than I am this may not be so obvious. But I grew up in this nation in Britain between two world wars.

And Britain was essentially a law abiding nation. People respected law. And people were basically honest.

You could trust people with your money. You could leave the door of your house unlocked. All that has changed.

Is that true? Changed in a to an amazing degree. One of the prime problems of the day is lawlessness. And I believe that it's impossible for the police to control it.

The police can control it when the attitude of the people is against lawlessness. But when the attitude of the people tolerates and even endorses lawlessness it's vain to expect the police to deal with the situation. They can't.

It says because lawlessness will abound the love of many. The Greek word there is agape which is normally used of Christian love. The love of many Christians will grow cold.

Brothers and sisters we need to bear that in mind. In an atmosphere of lawlessness it's very easy for our love to grow cold. But we have been warned.

And then Jesus says in verse 13 but he who endures to the end shall be saved. The Greek is more specific. It says he who has endured to the end shall be saved.

So you're saved now. But if you want to stay saved what do you have to do? To endure. That's right.

Jesus said in Luke 21 19 in this version in your patience possess your souls. But that's not a very clear translation. By your endurance purchase your souls.

That's the price you have to pay for the salvation of your soul. Endurance. As I say you're saved now.

Will you be saved ten years from now? If there are ten years left which is questionable. It depends on whether you have endured. He who has endured to the end he will be saved.

Now Jesus has given a many signs plural but he has not given the sign. But in verse 14 he gives the specific sign. The question was what will be the sign at the end of the age.

And verse 14 gives a specific answer. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the worlds. A witness to all the nations.

And then and that's then number three. Then the end will come. What is the sign that the end will come? The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.

Not some watered-down human version. But the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom in all the world as a witness to all the nations. So we know what it will take to bring the age to a close.

We're not left in doubt. We're not left to wonder. We have the answer.

Now keep your finger in Matthew and if you can find it turn to 2nd Peter chapter 3 verses 11 and 12. And let me just take one passage. 2nd Peter 3 11 and 12.

Therefore since all these things will be dissolved. That's basically everything that we consider to be permanent and stable will be dissolved. What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? It's a very important question.

What kind of people should we be? And then Peter gives part of the answer. He says looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. I pointed out yesterday that in Hebrews 9 28 it says Jesus will return with salvation for those who eagerly await his coming.

That's the looking for part. But here Peter goes further and he says hastening the coming of the day of God. How can we hasten the coming of the day of God? The answer is very simple.

By proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom in all nations. Now if you want the baby to be born you'll do anything you can to hasten the birth. There's one thing we can all be involved in doing which is proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom to all nations.

And when we do that we are hastening the coming of the day of God. But if we fail to do that we're not hastening it we're delaying it. And that's a fearful responsibility.

But I venture to say that everyone here this evening is in one or other of those two categories. You're either hastening it or you're delaying it. What do you have to do to delay it? The answer is do nothing.

That's all. Doing nothing is not normally considered a sin. But in Matthew 25 the next chapter in Matthew Jesus speaks about three people.

Three kinds of people who were all totally rejected by God. The first kind were the five foolish virgins who didn't take oil. The second was the unfaithful servant who buried his talent.

And the third kind of people were the nations the goat nations that didn't show love to the Jews. And I asked myself once what was there in common to all these people that caused them to be rejected. And I found a simple answer.

What did they do? Nothing. And that's all you have to do to be rejected is do nothing. It's very clear it's not just one example there are three different examples.

I pray tonight that those of you who hear me will take a decision to commit yourself in some way to the proclaiming of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations. That doesn't mean you have to be a missionary or a preacher or an evangelist. You can be an intercessor.

You can give them your finance. There are many different ways but if you're not involved at all I believe you are in danger of being rejected. The words of God are so clear.

We are not saved to serve ourselves. We're saved to serve the Lord and the people to whom the Lord sends us. In 1958 I never can pass this passage without saying this.

I was working as principal of a college for training African teachers in Kenya. And my my aim was to win my students to the Lord. And I was successful.

Hardly a student ever left her college who hadn't been saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. But one day I my car needed service. So I drove seven miles into the local town Kisumu and took my car to the service station.

I had a list in my pocket of all the things that I needed to do because I was very busy. But as I walked out of the service station I felt the Lord said to me not only does your car need oiling and greasing you need oiling and greasing. So I abandoned my program for the day.

Walked down to the shore of Lake Victoria Nianza which is just a few steps away from Kisumu. Sat down in the most beautiful place looking out across the tranquil waters of the lake. Pulled my New Testament my pocket New Testament out of my pocket and opened up without any specific intention of reading anything.

And my eye fell on Matthew 24 14 this gospel of the kingdom etc. And it was as if those words were just emblazoned across the sky in letters of gold and reflected on the waters of the lake. But in 1978 when Ruth and I were married God thrust us into a ministry that we didn't plan which is now virtually reaching all nations with the Word of God.

We supplied teaching material to leaders in more than 120 nations. My radio broadcast which incidentally can be heard at this moment in this particular town is now in ten languages and reaches virtually every continent on earth. And my books and my cassettes and my video cassettes have reached most nations on earth.

Now I don't say that to boast. My purpose is to encourage you to believe that if you align your life with God's purposes he will see that you come into line. You won't have the same ministry that I have but he has a way and he has a plan for you.

And it would be a tragedy if you came to the end of your Christian life and looked back over it and said really I've wasted most of my time. I've been busy with things that were not essential and not important. I've been serving myself rather than the Lord and the people of the Lord.

We have a little slogan in our ministry which I think it's rather a good one. It's called reaching the unreached and teaching the untaught. And I'm glad for it.

I think it's the marvelous grace of God that he has led us into this. Because I believe it's fully in line with the revealed purposes of God for his people. I want to leave that with you as something that you can meditate on.

Now we're going to go back to Matthew 24. I have no idea what the time is but I think it's getting late. From verse 14 to verse 15 there is a dramatic change.

Because verse 14 speaks all nations and all the world. And verse 15 and followers narrows the focus to a tiny little piece of territory at the east end of the Mediterranean. The land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

So there's a dramatic change at this point in God's focus. Keep your finger there and let me direct you to Romans 11 verse 25-26. These words are written to Gentile believers like most of us.

And Paul says for I do not desire brethren that you should be ignorant of this mystery. And almost every time Paul says I wish you wouldn't be ignorant. We find that God's people still are ignorant today.

It's remarkable. I do not desire brethren you should be ignorant of this mystery. Lest you should be wise in your own opinion or conceited.

Now what's the mystery? That hardening in part has happened to Israel. What's the next word? You see what I said? Always there's that word until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. So it's not forever but it's until God has gathered in all the nations that he has chosen and appointed for salvation.

And then it says and so all Israel will be saved. In other words there's a time when the focus is going to move from all the nations back to that one little people and that one little piece of territory Israel. And here it is in Matthew 24 very clear.

Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place. Now I'll offer you my opinion. The holy place is the temple area.

The most holy place on earth. And whatever the abomination of desolation is I believe it's something that indicates the Antichrist has taken over and established his claim to be God and demanded worship. And Jesus says when that happens look out.

And the words that he uses are amazingly dramatic. And we come to the next then. Then number 4 verse 16.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. All right get out if you're in that part which is called Judea. Which is mistakenly called the West Bank.

You don't find that phrase in the Bible. Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house. You know that in that part of the world many of the houses have flat roofs.

And they have outside staircases that lead directly up to the roof. So Jesus says if you're on the roof and whatever it is happens. Just go straight down the outside staircase and run off.

Don't even try to go inside your home. There are hardly any ways that he could express more dramatically the need for urgency. Verse 18.

Let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. All right somebody's out in the field in his shirt sleeves working. He doesn't have time to go back to his house and get his jacket.

He just has to take off running. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those with nursing babies in those days. That's the reason is obvious.

It's hard enough to flee when you're not pregnant or you don't have a nursing baby. But it'll be even more difficult for those. And now we come to an amazing thing.

He says pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. You see the prophetic scriptures set limits to what we can pray. The natural response would be well let's pray we don't have to flee.

But Jesus says that's not an option. You're going to have to flee. But you can pray that you won't have to flee in winter or on the Sabbath day.

You see how important it is that we know the prophetic scriptures. Because many many Christians are praying for things that are outside the limits. They can't happen because God's Word says they will not happen.

I heard about a preacher who said if we all pray hard enough maybe the battle of Armageddon will not take place. That's just plain stupid. The Bible says it will take place.

It's futile to pray that it won't. But within the limits which God has set we can pray the right prayer and not the wrong prayer. And in these limits the right prayer is pray that we don't have to flee.

This is the Jewish people mind you, in winter. Because winter is pretty tough. Nor on the Sabbath day.

Now why not on the Sabbath day. I lived in what was then Palestine under the British Mandate. It wouldn't have made any difference whether it was Saturday or Sunday.

But today it would. Because under the Jewish rule the Sabbath is a special day and most people don't travel on the Sabbath. And so a large number of people suddenly traveling on the Sabbath would become very conspicuous.

That carries a lot of implications. In other words Jesus assumes that at this time Israel will have been restored as a state and the rule of the Sabbath will be enforced. Let's go on.

Verse 21 and this is the fifth then. And it's a very solemn then. For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time no nor ever shall be.

Then at that point is coming what Bible commentators call the great tribulation. A period of anguish and suffering such as is without parallel in previous human history and will never be paralleled again. Now those of us who've lived through the Holocaust need to pause and consider what can ever happen that will be far worse than the Holocaust.

When six million Jews plus many others perished in the most horrible circumstances. But in Jeremiah 30 the Prophet predicts the regathering of Israel. In verse 3 he says for behold the days are coming says the Lord that I will bring back from captivity or from exile my people Israel and Judah and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers and they shall possess it.

How many of you know what land it is that God gave to the fathers the forefathers of Israel. There's only one land. You don't have to be a theologian to know.

And God says specifically I will cause them to return to that land and they shall possess it. Now there is a preacher who's a friend of mine in this country who once remarked that the restoration of Israel to their land cannot be from God because if it were from God there would be peace. He didn't know his Bible.

Let's look at the words that follow. Verse 5 for thus says the Lord we have heard a voice of trembling of fear and not of peace. Ask now and see whether a man is ever in labor with child.

So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor and all faces turn pale. God says there'll be a time of such anguish that men will behave like women in childbirth. He's not talking about peace.

Something has got to happen before peace comes. The birth has got to take place. But verse 7 says alas for that day is great so that none is like it and it is the time of Jacob's trouble but he shall be saved out of it.

There's a difference between being saved from it and saved out of it. A lot of us would like to be saved from some things but we won't be. But we can be saved out of them you understand.

In Romans chapter 2 verse 9 Paul says there's a certain order of tribulation to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. So when tribulation comes on the Jews first we know it's going to come on all other nations and in Revelation 7 there's a picture of those who come out of the great tribulation from all peoples and nations and tongues and languages. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white and they are praising God in eternity forever and ever.

Now we're going back to Matthew 24 verse 23 the sixth then. Then if anyone says to you look here is the Christ or the Messiah or there do not believe it. In times of trouble people always begin to look for a Messiah.

It's a fact of human history. But Jesus says be careful you don't get deceived. Verse 24 for false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders so as to deceive if possible even the elect the chosen ones.

But though they show great signs and wonders they are false. One of the great dangers in the charismatic movement is that we will automatically assume that anyone who produces signs and wonders has a message from God. It isn't necessarily true.

Satan can produce signs and wonders. False prophets and false messiahs can produce signs and wonders. We have to check against the Word of God.

We have to check their fruit. Jesus said by their fruit you will know them not by their signs and their wonders. You see how relevant all of this is.

I hope you can see that. Verse 25 Jesus says see I've told you before. In other words when it happens you can't say to the Lord.

Lord you didn't warn me because he says I have warned you. Verse 26 therefore if they say to you look he is in the desert do not go out or look he is in the innermost inner rooms do not believe it. In other words no secret coming of the Lord.

For wherever the carcass is there the vultures will be gathered together. How many of you have seen vultures? You don't see them much in Britain. It's been in the Middle East or Africa.

Vultures are very significant. I remember seeing them first of all in the desert of Egypt and there's this cloudless blue sky and this little speck appears there and it's a vulture hovering and after a little while another vulture joins and they begin to circle and every time they're coming lower and lower and there may be four or five or six vultures circling down and they're coming lower down. And when you see that what do you know that something is dying down there.

And Jesus said when you see all the vultures you know that there's a carcass there. I believe it's the carcass of our present civilization. It's dying and the vultures, every kind of evil creed and cult and force are circling around.

Jesus says that shows you death is near. Verse 29 this is very important. Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

In other words something cosmic is going to happen. Something that shakes not merely earth but the cosmos. Verse 30 the next then, the seventh then, then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven.

And verse and the eighth then, then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. That's the climax. That's what we've been building up to.

But notice when it will happen. Immediately after the tribulation. In other words the main event that precedes the return of Jesus is the tribulation.

That's why I said, was it yesterday? I don't believe the church is going to take the world over and present it to Jesus. On the contrary, I think the situation in the world will be worse than it has ever been in human history. And that's the moment at which Jesus will come.

And that's why we need endurance. Because we're going to have something to endure. When you travel in an airplane and the sign comes on fasten seatbelts.

What does that tell you? There's going to be turbulence. And all these scriptures are like one big sign that says fasten your seatbelt and take your stand. Lord I'm not going to give up.

I'm not going to give way. No matter what happens. I will not deny you.

I will not renounce my faith. If necessary I'll purchase the salvation of my soul by my endurance. But my soul is precious.

I will not sacrifice it to any other concern. I've never succeeded in getting through Matthew 24 in one session. I've tried many times.

I've never yet succeeded. I think we're going to have to leave it. But I want to take you to two things in Luke 21 which directly relate to that.

Luke 21. Incidentally are you happy that Jesus is coming back? Well just notify your face. I realize that I've said some things that shocked some people.

Shall I tell you something? If it shocked you, you needed to be shocked. Christianity is not a Sunday school picnic. It's a battle, a struggle for life and death.

Praise God we can win. Come up here. We've got a proclamation.

It's time we made it. Don't get discouraged. Don't get down hearted.

We're on the winning side as long as we don't switch sides. That's all. We're going to say 1 Corinthians 15 57 58.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved brethren we are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Would you like to say that? I think it do you good to stand up for a minute or two.

You've been sitting a long while. I think you have to say it after us. I don't think you can remember it.

How do we start? But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved brethren we are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Praise God.

I think I can finish.

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