

Tribulation and the End
Mark 13:14-27

This morning we jump back into the life of our Savior and the book of Mark. And we are looking at this famous sermon by Him, the Olivette Discourse, this sermon that is famous not just because of its length or the time of His life in which He delivers it but because of the very content; the fact that it's a sermon about His return. It's a sermon about His own return to this earth, His coming to this earth in glory. So, we get to study that. We have already begun it, and we will continue this morning. I mean, on this topic, we can think of such relevance in terms of what we hear people talk about. Here in 2017, we hear people that are eager to declare the end is here, or it is at least near, no doubt based upon various occurrences and experiences they've had. People proclaim, well, we have dynamic world leaders making these massive claims and rising up against each other and calling each other out. Of course, we're near the end of this world. And there's warfare and increased warfare and rumors of more warfare. We are on the verge of the very end of everything as we know it. And the weapons have only increased as well. There's natural disasters. There's calamities, and the physical, just, events that are taking place, taking people's lives, and increasing it seems or, at least, the frequency. It would appear there's economic crisis, and how the idea of poverty and even when it starts to knock on the front door of people in the west and in America, they start to feel that we are close to the end.

All these things, ironically, have been addressed by Jesus already. All these things Jesus already talked about. All these things Jesus already said are just the beginning. They're just the beginning of birth pains. They're just the beginning. We haven't seen anything yet. These are just the normal things to expect, and they are false signs, they are distractions meant to lead people astray and you are not to fall for it however. This morning we actually consider the legitimate sign of the end. We actually consider what will take place at the end, and we see Christ coming as a result of it. These events are massive, and they are unprecedented. Right? They are not just the continuation of what we've seen and what we've experienced in our day and age. These events precede the glorious return of Christ to this earth to establish His kingdom. This is the meaty content here of the Olivette Discourse where we see Jesus actually answering the question that the disciples are bringing up, and Him getting to the point.

Let's read our text for this morning. Mark 13:14-27; "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, 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. 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. 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 christs 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. But in those days, after the 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 the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven." This is the Olivette Discourse, and this is where we actually get into the specifics of what signs will accommodate and be there at this end, at this moment when Jesus Himself will visibly and physically return to this earth.

As we've discussed, this is Jesus responding to what took place at the beginning of the chapter. As they were finally leaving the temple on this busy day, the disciples there are admiring and adoring even the temple building and all the other buildings there on the temple mount and taking note of them, to which Jesus responds, "...there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." Jesus actually responds to their time of admiring the temple by saying, it's all going to be destroyed. He actually predicts and prophesizes what will take place in 70 AD when the Romans come and, in fact, do this. Not too many years later, the Romans will come and destroy that temple complex. However, we see more questions that come here as we move on in verses 3-4 when the four disciples mentioned, "...Peter, James, John, and Andrew say, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?'" That is what kicked off this sermon. That is

what started this discourse as Jesus talks about these things because the disciples knew they had enough knowledge of the Old Testament, enough knowledge of the Scriptures to know that with the distress, with the destruction, with the trials and tribulations that will come to God's people, there will soon after that come kingdom. The King will come, and He will reign. So, they're asking, when will this end come, and what will be the signs that come with the end?

And so, Jesus has spent time talking about the typical distractions, the things that will come that are just the beginning, and as we look at today's passage, we see Him actually discuss the signs that they can count on, that will be there, that are legitimate signs of the end of this tribulation. So, we look at verses 14-23 to begin our time this morning - the characteristics of this tribulation, this tribulation that the disciples were aware of that the Scriptures actually speak of, as we're going to see this morning, this tribulation that is to come. Jesus has described the events that will lead people astray and that will be distracting, and false signs of this tribulation, and now, He gets into the actual signs of this tribulation and the end. We begin with verses 14-18, to see the sign of the tribulation. It is interesting because what we have this morning is a sermon that both covers the tribulation and distress, as well as the actual return of Christ to the earth. And yet, as we just read, you can tell the majority of the time spent in this sermon by Jesus is on the tribulation. It's on the tribulation, the trials, the distress that will come to God's people before the coming of the Son of Man which is just merely mentioned at the end.

So, first, we see the need for tribulation that comes and the actual sign of it. It's mentioned right away in verse 14; "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand) ..." Jesus uses this phrase, and at first, it's cryptic. It's a little odd. It's not terminology that we're throwing out there every day. It's not terminology that we've seen Jesus mentioning thus far in His ministry, in His teaching, in His life, and so it causes us to take a pause here and wonder, okay what exactly is He stating here by this sign of tribulation? "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be..." What Jesus is actually doing is not making something up. He's pulling from the Old Testament. He's taking a phrase. He's taking a prophecy that comes straight from Daniel. Daniel had already prophesied this. Daniel had actually mentioned this phrase three times in his book. If you were to read through

Daniel, you would see this phrase, "...the abomination of desolation..." You'd see it mentioned three times there, and so Jesus is taking this phrase, and He's showing how what Daniel talked about is in fact true, and it is still to be expected. It's what is to come at the time of the end.

Jesus is taking Daniel's teaching and affirming it and in fact expanding upon it. This is the phrase - maybe a better way to understand "...the abomination of desolation..." it's the abomination that causes desolation. It's the thing that is such an offense to God that actually causes Him to be basically done with and to call His temple and the offering and the temple sacrificial system as just defiled, and it's desolate because of this abomination, this offense that comes to Him. So, when we look at the book of Daniel, we learn a little bit more about this phrase, and it helps us understand what Jesus is saying here. One of the times we see this phrase is in Daniel 11:31. This is the verse that we see here; "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." It's a bit odd. We're just jumping into the middle of that chapter, so there's so much that's taking place, but Daniel is mentioning an individual, a person that will come and take away the burnt offerings and completely stop what's taking place in the temple of God and the people of Israel, and he will instead setup an abomination that makes the temple desolate and defiled.

And so, we wonder, what is this in reference to? Is this a future event? Is this something that took place in the past? What is this talking about? Well, if you look at Daniel 11, in the whole chapter which we don't have time to do right now, you would realize that Daniel is indeed prophesying in very detailed fashion, but the events he's prophesying are the events that take place between the Old Testament and the New Testament. So, as Jesus utters these words, there's actually an ability to look back on something that Daniel prophesied, and when Daniel stated this phrase, he's looking ahead to something that will take place, and we don't have a lot of information on that from the Bible itself, but what we do have is God, in fact, detailing in prophetic fashion exactly what will take place. And when you look at history, and you observe what Daniel prophesied in Daniel 11, and you look at what took place in between the Old and New Testament, and you realize that's spot-on. That's perfect. That's God actually prophesying. That's God declaring the end from the beginning, and so, that's what takes place here in Daniel 11.

So, to give you a fuller picture of what the exact kind of prophecies that are taking place in Daniel 11, it's essentially amounting to this struggle that's happening between a king of the north and a king of the south. And you go, okay, who are these people? These are kind of mysterious individuals. When we look at it, you find out the king of the north is the leader of the Seleucid empire. They're in Syria, and they're north of Israel. And the king of the south is the Ptolemies that are down in Egypt. They're south of Israel. And so what Daniel's prophesying in Daniel 11 is this struggle that goes back and forth back and forth between the north fighting against the south, and then the south coming back retaliating and fighting against the north, and there's this constant struggle, and who's in between? Israel is in between. The people of God are experiencing kind of the force of all this coming upon them and getting torn back and forth back and forth in this struggle between the north and the south.

And so, in this particular instance, Daniel is prophesying about a king of the north who will come down and he will take hold of the glorious land, the land of Israel, and he will be so bent on Greek culture and Greek philosophy and Greek mythology that he will force the Jews that live in Israel to embrace it, to embrace the language, the culture, even the religion, and it gets so bad that it's not enough for him to just own the land and to be able to tax the people, the Jewish people and the Israelites, he actually goes so far, because he cares so much about this, that he goes into the temple, the temple for Yahweh, the temple that the Jewish people have. He goes into the temple, and he goes so far as to take a pig, an unclean animal to God and the Jewish people, and sacrifice it on the alter of that temple, and then he declares the temple a temple to Zeus. Alright?

For the Jewish people, this was just horrific. This was, in fact, an abomination. This was an abomination to the people because it was an abomination to God. God had clearly laid out - and we're aware of books like Leviticus and in the Old Testament that talk about how things are to be done and how the temple system is supposed to operate - so how do you think God feels when a gentile comes in and walks through the holy place of the temple and brings an unclean animal and sacrifices on the alter and says forget Yahweh, this is all about Zeus? Alright? It's an abomination, and that's what Daniel's actually prophesying here. So, when we think of this phrase of "...the abomination of desolation..." that's a good picture for us,

that event that took place in history. This man named Antiochus Epiphanes who was that king of the Seleucids, who was the king that did that, he came in and just defiled the temple that was "...the abomination of desolation..." that was prophesied in Daniel 11.

Now, this isn't the only time that phrase shows up in Daniel. It actually shows up two more times. One of them is in Daniel 9, and in Daniel 9, you have a very complex and sophisticated prophecy that we just don't have time to get into about, this time frame, the clock that God is giving, in fact, for Him coming and actually coming to His people, coming to Jerusalem, but in the midst of that there is a prophecy here that comes to Daniel. Daniel 9:27; "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. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." So, there is, again here, another prophecy about someone who's going to come, and at first, he seems like an ally. He makes a covenant, and it says for one week, but the more literal word is for "one seven," and so, the question is, what is the seven? Seven days? Seven weeks? Seven months? Seven years? And so, you find out in looking at the context of what's being stated there in Daniel 9, it's, in fact, seven years. It's a seven-year period. So, this individual comes and has this agreement, this kind of covenant, for one chunk of seven years, and at the half-way point, he puts an end to the sacrifice and offerings, and there it is; "...on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate..." There is this expectation of one who will do this in the temple of God.

Again, we see this phrase show up in Daniel 12:11; "And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days." Go figure. That's three and a half years. That's just like what we saw in Daniel 9, the halfway point of that seven-year period, so you still have these two places in Daniel where there's this expectation. There's this prophecy of this "...abomination of desolation..." that will take place, and so there's this kind of prophecy here, and it's expected to come, and so some say, well, when Jesus is talking about this, and when Daniel's talking about it, couldn't it just be what the Romans did? We all know the Romans came forty years after Jesus, and they came in 70 AD, and they came to Jerusalem. They destroyed the city, killed a lot of people and ultimately destroyed the temple. Could that be an abomination to God? Would that be the fulfillment of those things? Is that

possible? And that's what some people actually believe about this passage, about not only Daniel, but what Jesus is saying here that that's the sign, that's the tribulation. However, when you look at the events of history, there's not really an abomination of the temple that actually took place in 70 AD. It was just destruction, just someone came, and they destroyed what was there. There wasn't this abomination that looked like what Antiochus Epiphanes did who came in and took an unclean animal and just defiled the offerings there and then devoted the temple to Zeus. This was different. It was just destruction. It wasn't really an "...abomination of desolation..." really, 70 AD was just simply a destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

And so, when we're trying to think of what this could actually look like, Paul in the New Testament actually gives us a little more help as well. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, speaking about these things he says, "Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, 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." That's a clearer picture. That's a clearer picture of what kind of "...abomination of desolation..." we're talking about. We're talking about someone that just doesn't come and destroy things. We're talking about someone that actually comes and commits this blasphemy of setting himself against every so-called god or object of worship so far, to say he is in fact god and everyone must worship him, taking His place. It's an abomination to God, and this is the description that we get for what's being talked about with Daniel, what Jesus is here clarifying, and what Paul will further state in 2 Thessalonians. This is the "...abomination of desolation..." This is the sign of, in fact, tribulation and distress for the people of God.

And we could even go beyond Paul, and we could go to the book of Revelation, and in the book of Revelation, what do you find? There'll be worship of an individual, the antichrist. He, through the power of Satan, will work and do miracles. The false prophet will come, and he will, in fact, support him with miracles and signs and wonders, and the people will actually worship the antichrist because of the help of the false prophet. And the antichrist himself will claim to be God and utter these blasphemies that Paul is talking about. This is the "...abomination of desolation..." that is expected. This is yet future. Right? To be very clear, this is not something that took place in the past. When Jesus states this, it will take place in the

future. And for us today, it still has not taken place. It is still to take place, this "...abomination of desolation...", this moment where someone will defile, go into the temple of God and set themselves up as God. As Jesus says, someone that's "...standing where he ought not to be..." in the temple of God.

Well, what does Jesus go on to state? "...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, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak." It's serious. Thinks of how terrible this was going to be that Jesus describes this type of retreat. This is how quickly - this is the swift manner in which they must exit and leave Judea "...flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out..." You might think, who's on the rooftop? What's going on with that? Well, their houses back then actually accommodated this. They all had this, and they had stairs going up the side of the outside of their house where you could go up on the rooftop for several different reasons. Sometimes just for praying, you might actually have chores, things hanging out up there, there's even celebrating festivities, and people would go up on top of their houses. And so, if this was taking place, Jesus says don't even go down the side of your house and go in for a second, just leave get out. Don't take a moment to go in the house. If you're in the field, don't even go back for a cloak. Comfort? It's not worth it. You need to leave immediately. This is how bad it is.

One commentator, to help describe this for us and showing that this is clearly a future event, says, "The danger will be so great that people should flee without stopping to gather up possessions. Again, this detail does not square well with the events of the 60's and 70's when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Jesus' point is that one must flee immediately and in great haste. The Jewish war had been waged for three years before Jerusalem was besieged. The approach of the Roman army was slow, the opportunity to escape prolonged. No. Jesus' warning means that when the '...abomination of desolation...' is set up where he must not stand, the end is now at hand. The danger is great. The city must be abandoned without a moment's delay" In 70 AD, there was a long expectation of the Romans coming to besiege. Jesus does not indicate that this will be the case in the future. In the future, this "...abomination of desolation..." will indicate that the time has come, and it is immediate. ... It is immediate. It's so bad that in verse 17, He says,

“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.” As you run, as you flee from Judea, “Pray that it may not happen in winter,” when there’s higher rivers to cross and less routes to take as you’re trying to run away, and then you have children to care for as you’re trying to leave in this time.

Why is this sign of the abomination that causes desolation so massive in terms of its significance? Why is Jesus representing it in this significant manner? Well, we go back to our passage in verse 19, and this is where Jesus actually describes the severity of the tribulation, the severity. This is not just so massive because of how blasphemous it is. It’s not just massive because of the outrageous claim that the antichrist will make. It’s massive because of the severity of this time that will come. Look at 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. 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.” Think about this statement Jesus is making in verse 19; “...in those days there will be such tribulation...” that the world has never seen, never seen in the past or currently at that time, nor “...never will be.” This is massive tribulation. I mean, just think of the implications of a statement like this. Jesus is saying when the “...abomination of desolation...” is observed, and you see this, get ready for the worst pain that the world has and ever will feel. That’s a big statement.

In fact, Scripture talks about this other places. Jesus isn’t the first one to bring this up. In Jeremiah 30:7, we have this prophecy from the prophet; “Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.” And again, even Daniel has mentioned this time in this severe manner. Daniel 12:1; “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.” Alright. This is massive. To continue to show the severity, one commentator states, “The tribulation will be so great that it will eclipse all crises of Biblical history, which is quite a claim when we remember the flood, the Babylonian captivity, and the great war with Antiochus as was prophesied by Daniel. And if you think about it though, this actually makes sense with our knowledge of Scripture (right?)

because some of us, hopefully out of curiosity at some point, have read the book of Revelation, and that looks terrible. The events of Revelation are just absolutely terrifying. Those are terrible events that come. You read Revelation 6-18, and you get a picture of this kind of tribulation that the world has never seen, and there won't be anything like it beyond it.

Jesus actually states, "And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved." That's how bad this is. There'd be a threat to the existence of mankind because of how much terror and how much calamity is coming. So, the Lord actually keeps this time of tribulation short. He cuts it short as we saw. We saw the seven in Daniel 9. You have the seven-year period rather than longer than that, like a lifetime. If you read the tribulation described in Revelation, you have convincing weight behind what Jesus is stating here. It does in fact look that bad. And again, to be clear, this is not referring to 70 AD when the Romans come and destroy Jerusalem. One commentator says, "To be sure this war threatened all Jewish lives in Jerusalem but the fate of the whole of humanity did not hang in the balance." You think of the Romans coming and destroying Jerusalem; that's just the Romans and the Jews at that time. What about everyone else in the world? They're fine. They weren't affected. But what we're talking about and what Jesus is saying and what Revelation reveals is a time that is terrible tribulation for all the inhabitants, for all mankind.

Jesus goes on to say, "But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days." This is a sign of the grace of God. Why would He cut short the days of the tribulation? To demonstrate His mercy, His grace in the midst of righteous judgment. God is totally fair in doing this. God is righteous in pouring out those terrible events upon the inhabitants of the earth. He is righteous to do so, to bring His wrath in that manner. Yet, He is gracious and merciful "...for the sake of [His] elect..." those that're chosen, those that are actually to come through that time. you ask who are "...the elect..." when we're talking about this future tribulation? Well, if you jump to the book of Revelation, you get a description of these one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed Jewish remnants, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. and so, these one hundred forty-four thousand literal people are sealed and protected and elected, chosen to be preserved during this time, to believe in Jesus the Messiah, and to inherit the kingdom literally, physically, when Jesus comes back. So, God is gracious and

merciful in the midst of this judgement that is unprecedented, that comes upon the earth and its inhabitants.

Of course, there will still be the working of Satan during this time. Verses 21-23, we see the seduction in the tribulation. The seduction that takes place in the tribulation. In verse 21, we read, “And then 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 and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.” This is the seduction that will take place. Jesus warns about the rise of deceptive and powerful leaders that will come, leaders that make false claims. And Jesus has already told about them. He’s already actually warned His disciples of these people that will come. These are the people that were coming. And He said the end is not near. Don’t go after them. These are just the beginnings of birth pains. But ironically, when it gets worse and when there’s such calamity upon the earth, it’s a great time for someone like Satan to use this opportunity to rise up and to bring someone to power who will lead the people and that everyone can look to in a terrible time of tragedy upon the earth.

It’s interesting that Jesus warns the tribulation will be this time “For false christs and false prophets will arise...” and lead many astray. When in the book of Revelation, that’s exactly what you find. You find the false christ, the antichrist working with the power of Satan, and you find a false prophet working with the power of Satan, both of them seducing the people, gaining the whole world to follow after them. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, Paul continues to write about the end times in “The coming of the lawless one [once again, that is the antichrist] is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” At a time when such calamity’s being poured out, God’s wrath upon the earth, and people are asking questions, Satan will seize the opportunity. He will jump into the power vacuum and he will bring the delusion of his false signs and wonders and the miracles. Even the rise of the antichrist will be hinged upon this. The rise of the antichrist will be one of him having a fatal and mortal wound that he is healed from, and he comes back, and the whole world will marvel at that. They will marvel at the antichrist and they will come to him, and he will make these bold claims, claiming to be God. Then the false prophet will come and do more signs and wonders and point everyone to worship, in fact,

the antichrist. And the world will buy it completely. They will go for it. They will go for this delusion.

In fact, when you read on in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, Paul says, "...God sends them a strong delusion..." This isn't like God's surprised by Satan's activity during the tribulation. God allows this to take place. He knows exactly what's happening. In fact, the delusion is so strong, the signs and wonders are so convincing that Jesus actually says, "...if possible, [they would even sway] the elect." The elect, the ones that've been set apart by God, that've been chosen by God, could even be seduced by this. But obviously, Jesus says "...if possible..." So, what does that mean? Not when God's involved - when God has elected, when God has chosen, when He's set aside His remnant, they will not fall for anything Satan can bring even if it's the biggest guns he has. They won't fall for it.

Jesus goes on in verse 23; "But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand." He calls for practical action in light of this information. Again, not a time for you to fill your minds with more information, not a time for you to be able to stock up that knowledge for Bible Trivia, but a time for you to act, a time for you to know how to live, to know how to actually proceed in your life with this information you now have, not to waste away but to be on guard, to stand firm. This is also another sign of God's grace. If you think about it, that He would actually inform His followers what is to come. God doesn't have to do this. He can just simply say trust me; I'm your Creator. But He goes so far to give more details, to give more information for His disciples. This is His grace. It's like He did with the people of Israel in Isaiah's time in Isaiah 46:8-10; "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' " Jesus here preaching. Jesus here proclaiming the truth and indicating He is in fact God, declaring "...the end from the beginning..." before these things all take place. "But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand." Don't be surprised.

So, after all this time of describing the sign of the end, Jesus then moves to describe the glorious moment when He returns to this earth. And that's what we find in verses 24-27, the coming of the Son of Man ... the coming of the

Son of Man. We get a picture of the coming of the Son of Man and how connected it is to this tribulation in verses 24-25, where we actually see, you could say, the aftermath of the tribulation. There's the aftermath of the tribulation in verses 24-25; "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." Jesus paints a picture for them. You don't just have to take His word that He says the tribulation's the worst time you can imagine on earth. He goes on to say that after that tribulation, what's it going to be like? The sun's not even shining - the moon obviously not having its effect - the stars falling to the earth. Alright? This is a terrible thing; "...the powers in the heavens will be shaken." And again, we read in Revelation, we look at the sealed judgments, we look at the sixth seal, we look at the fourth trumpet, we look at the seventh bow. All these moments of God's wrath being poured out, and what takes place? Cosmic disturbances, not symbolic, not some try to scientifically explain this. This is a cosmic disturbance where you actually have stars falling, where you actually have the sun and the moon being darkened.

God in complete control, I mean, really, to put it bluntly, and to do straight forward, God in creation week creates the stars. He creates the sun. He creates the moon, and all the stars in the sky. He's creating and putting things in place. In the tribulation, He's un-creating, He's dismantling His creation. That's what's taking place. It's a simple un-creation. He literally created and now He's literally un-creating in this time. This is the aftermath of the tribulation, and this sets up for the legitimate physical return of Christ. That's what we find in verse 26, the appearing. After seeing the aftermath of the tribulation and how terrible things will actually be, we then see the appearing of Christ in verse 26; "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory." Fascinating! That is all that's said about that. That's all that's said about the coming of Christ. Right? The whole emphasis is Jesus answering their questions that they've asked Him. The whole emphasis is Jesus talking about the signs that they can expect leading up to His return and the kingdom that will follow. And so, Jesus just gives this one sentence, "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory." That's it. We know that this is, in fact, a visible return of Jesus to the earth. It's not symbolic. It's not spiritual in some way. It's as Revelation 1:7 states, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him..."

That's why going after false christs and false prophets is just so foolish if you understand the truth because you can't have someone say, look, I found the Christ. Oh, really? If you had, then I would've seen Him because "...every eye will see him..." when He returns. Notice the description of His return, "...in clouds with great power and glory." It's a glorious fashion. It's noticeable. It's blinding in His return. His glory. His splendor as the Son of Man is described in Daniel 7:13; "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man..." The same way this will be Jesus when He returns. And to know this for sure we could just look at Acts 1:11. We can just compare it to how He left. Jesus was physically on this earth. He physically died. He physically rose again and He physically ascended up in the clouds into heaven. And so, that's why you have angels telling the disciples, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." He will come literally, physically, in the clouds of glory. And of course, if we really wanted the best picture of this glorious appearing, we could go to Revelation 19, and you can see that amazing and yet terrifying moment when Jesus is on a white horse coming with His army with Him, and He is slaying people with the sword of His mouth. This scene that actually leads to Him confronting the antichrist and the false prophet and throwing them into the lake of fire. It's not a battle. It's not a war. It's a slaughter. When Jesus comes back, His physical return will be glorious, and none can even attempt to thwart that.

Finally, after this return, we get to verse 27. We see the assembly - the assembly that takes place; "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." This process of gathering His elect from all over the earth is probably a reference to gathering those one hundred forty-four thousand Jewish remnants alright? Those one hundred forty-four thousand that have been sealed, those that have come to believe in Jesus as a Messiah, that have actually been preserved by God through this seven years of torment on the earth and tribulation, they're the ones that are then being brought together. And so, when Jesus says, "...he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds..." it's a statement of saying, He will get everyone. There's not going to be someone that He misses. There's not going to be someone that gets neglected or didn't make it through, that accidentally perished. But no, He will in fact make good on that promise.

Those whom He has sealed, He will deliver, He will bring to Himself, and He will usher in to the kingdom that will take place "...from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven." Talking about really where the sky meets the land and the horizon as far as you can see, He will gather all of them. They will all come near. They will all draw near to Jesus at that time and enter into His earthly kingdom described in Revelation 20:1-6, a kingdom that we've often labeled the millennial kingdom, that thousand-year kingdom, that will legitimately and literally take place on this earth with Jesus reigning as the King. So, what do you do with this, this glorious picture of the end, Jesus delivering in the most amazing fashion? Knowing these details of the end and the future increase our commitment to God in the present. They have to. We become more aware of the importance of our decisions now for the sake of that glorious day when Christ returns. We also become more appreciative of the work of Christ and what He has done to give us confidence regarding His future reign. We have confidence of Christ's return because of the work that He initially did when He came the first time.