The Signs of the End

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0:00] We're in Matthew 23, 37 to 24, 35. We've come to what's known as the Olivet Discourse It's gonna be a ride.

You're gonna have to pay close attention, but we'll get through it together. Matthew 23, 37 to 24, 35. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, I come to this difficult and contested text with fear and trembling for I don't want to teach anything that is wrong.
It's not of you. So Lord, guide my lips. Guide the ears and hearts of everyone here. Close them to anything that is not true, anything that is not of you.
But may your truth seep in deeply and pierce all of our hearts. So that we live this day in light of Christ's death and resurrection and in light of Christ's return to make all things new.
Fill us with that hope. Breathe fresh hope by your spirit into the lungs or the spiritual lungs and the hearts of all your sons and daughters now, this morning, this moment.
[2:04] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand if you're able so that we can honor God as we read from his word.

Matthew 23, 37 to 24, 35. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.
How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing. See, your house is left to you desolate.
For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Jesus left the temple and was going away when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.
But he answered them, You see all these, do you not? Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.
[3:04] 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?

And Jesus answered them, See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ. And they will lead many astray.
And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed for this must take place. But the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.
And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death.
And you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.
[4:04] And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations. And then the end will come. So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, 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 to take what is in his house. 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 your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.
And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or there he is, do not believe it.

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[5:18] For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.

So if they say to you, look, he is in the wilderness, do not go out. If they say, look, he is in the inner rooms, do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man and 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.
And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.
[6:24] From the fig tree, learn this lesson. As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also when you see all these things, 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.
This is the word of the Lord. The many runners we have in our midst can attest to the widely shared experience that when they're in the middle of a race and they can see the finish line near the close of a race, they start to run faster.
Scientific studies have also confirmed this. It's called end spurt phenomenon. But aren't runners the most exhausted by the end of the race?
So why do they run faster as they near the end of the race when they see the finish line? There are several reasons. One, when you can see the finish line, the goal and the reward of the race is imminent.
[7:42] The gratification of finishing the race, the medal that you're going to win and the personal record you're going to break, it drives people harder to run faster. When the reward is nearer, it motivates.

The psychologists call this the goal gradient effect. Effort increases the nearer you get to the goal.
Second, two, when you can see the finish line, you know that you don't need to conserve any more energy.
You can expend all your remaining energy because you know that you're going to be done and you can be flat out exhausted, but you're going to get rest after that finish line. Three, pain becomes more tolerable as you near the end.
Pain that would seem to you unbearable for the next five miles is bearable for the next 200 meters.
So people can endure more pain when they can see the finish line.
This is why we motivate one another with expressions like this. You can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Keep your eyes on the prize.
[8:48] The finish line is in sight. We say these kinds of things because a pilgrim who can see his fatherland in the distance walks with renewed vigor.

This is why it is essential that we understand what Matthew 24 teaches us about the end of the age and the return of Christ. The main point of this passage is this.
Endure through tribulation and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. First, we're going to talk about Christ's departure and the desolation of Jerusalem. And then we're going to talk about Christ's return and the consolation of the new Jerusalem.
First, let's talk about his departure. In the preceding passage I talked about last week, Jesus denounced the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and the scribes for shedding the righteous blood of all of God's people and prophets from Abel in Genesis to Zechariah.
That's the A to Z, the first and the last martyrs of God in the Old Testament. And then Jesus said in verse 36, truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.
[9:58] Jesus prophesies of judgment that will befall this generation, the generation that is there at the time of Jesus' life. Because of their rejection of God's messengers and ultimately of their rejection of Christ, Jesus himself, all these things are going to come upon them.

What is all these things? Jesus tells us in verse 37, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones, those who are sent to it.

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Jerusalem, the chosen city of the temple of the Lord God's dwelling place that was once called in Psalm 48, 1-2, his holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, the joy of all the earth, is now called the city that kills the prophets and stones, those who are sent to it.
And Jesus continues, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing.
This avian imagery of a mother bird caring for her young under her wings is a rich imagery that's used throughout the Old Testament. At the end of the Pentateuch, at the end of Deuteronomy, describing how God led Israel out of the wilderness, out of Egypt and then through the wilderness and brought them to Canaan, Deuteronomy 32, 10-12 says that God found Israel in a desert land, in the howling waste of the wilderness, and then encircled him and cared for him and kept him as the apple of his eye.
[11:35] Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him.

No foreign God was with him. And again in Psalm 91 verse 4, it says, The Lord God will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge.
It was God's heart and therefore his son's heart, Jesus' heart, to gather us, to gather all his people together under his wings like a mother bird to protect us and to keep us.
But we, or Jerusalem in that age, was foolish. They were not willing. How many of us have spurned Jesus in his desire to gather us under his wings?
So Jesus pronounces his judgment in verses 38 to 39. These things that he said will come upon this generation. He says, See, your house is left to you desolate.
[12:39] For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Remember, Jesus is still at the temple courtyard. He hasn't gone to the Mount of Olives yet. And so when he talks about your house, he's talking about the temple.

And he's saying, he's prophesying that the temple of God will be deserted by God, abandoned by God. It will become a desolate house. And this echoes the language of prophet Daniel in Daniel 9.17, who after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Babylonians, prayed, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.
God had warned in Jeremiah 22.5, If you do not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation.
And that's exactly what happened. Later, when Israel and Judah ran after idols, abandoned their God, God himself deserted his temple. And prophet Ezekiel actually saw in his prophetic vision in Ezekiel 10-11, he saw the glory of the Lord depart from the temple.
Imagine the tragic and devastating scene. The glory of the Lord coming up out of the temple, mounted up on the wings of the cherubim, and then leaving it.
[14:05] And there's nothing you can do to stop it. It was the presence of God that made the promised land the promised land. It was the presence of God that made the temple what it is.

It was the presence of God that set Israel apart from all the other nations. It was the presence of God in the temple that guaranteed their future and gave them hope in life. And now, Ezekiel, in his prophetic vision, beholds the glory of the Lord leave.
The desertion of the temple by the Lord naturally and inevitably leads to the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians. And once the glory of the Lord departs from Jerusalem, do you know where it goes next?
It says in Ezekiel 11-23, the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city. Do you guys know what mountain that is?
East side of Jerusalem. It's the Mount of Olives. It's no coincidence that Jesus, after leaving Jerusalem here for the last time, he's not going to come back until he's arrested.
[15:25] He's not coming back on his own. So, Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives next in chapter 24 and then prophesies his judgment over Jerusalem.

So, in Ezekiel, the glory of Yahweh left the temple and stopped at Mount of Olives. In Matthew, Jesus Christ leaves the temple and stops on the Mount of Olives.
Matthew is drawing a bold parallel and connection to tell us that Jesus is the glory of the Lord. He is the Son of God.
When Jesus leaves Jerusalem and its temple, God himself is leaving and if these people knew what was happening when Jesus left Jerusalem, they would have broken down and wept.

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To emphasize this, Matthew 24, 1 says, Jesus left the temple and was going away twice to emphasize that he left for good. And then, quoting the Messianic Psalm, Psalm 118, 26, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
[16:31] We bless you from the house of the Lord. That's what the inhabitants of Jerusalem should have said to Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah. But instead, they cursed him, rejected him, and will soon kill him.

And so, the glory of the Lord God, Jesus, the Son of God, leaves the temple in Jerusalem. And just as Yahweh's departure from the temple, the first temple, led to this destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Babylonian Empire, Jesus' departure from Jerusalem will then lead to the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 AD.
And that's exactly what Jesus prophesies of in chapter 24. As they are leaving Jerusalem, Jesus' disciples point out to Jesus the buildings of the temple in chapter 24, verse 1.
The parallel account in Mark 13, verse 1, is a little more vivid. There, the disciples say to Jesus, look, teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings.
They're pointing out the architectural marvel that the second temple, Herodian temple, was. The first temple built by Solomon was already magnificent, and then it was destroyed by the Babylonians and then Ezra, Nehemiah, with help from prophet, I mean, priest Joshua, Haggai, and Zerubbabel rebuilt the second temple, but it was not that glorious, not as glorious as the first.
[17:59] And so Herod, King Herod, trying to curry favor with the Jews and styling himself as the king of the Jews, even though he wasn't quite king, rebuilt and revamped and expanded that second temple so that he was even bigger than the first temple.

The stones used for the temple mount walls were known as the Herodian ashlars, and they're famous for their immaculately chiseled borders and their immense size, and they have found one of those underground, and the largest one that they found weighs 570 tons and is longer than a school bus.
That's about the weight of 95 full-grown African elephants, or three to four fully loaded Boeing 737s. So imagine a temple complex, a building built with such massive monolithic stones.
It's impressive, to say the least. The whole complex was the size of 26 to 27 football fields, American football fields. Three times, almost three times as tall as the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, which was counted as one of the ancient wonders, seven wonders of the ancient world.
A Jewish rabbi, therefore, with reason, commented one time that he who has not seen the Temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building in his life. First century historians remark that when they see the gold-plated temple, the light was dazzling and blinding, and when they see the pure white, the top, it looked like a snow-capped mountain soaring over the horizon and dominating the skyline.
[19:39] The disciples marveled at that, saying, look how beautiful, look what wonderful stones, what wonderful buildings, and then Jesus bursts their bubble. There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

It's a remarkable prophecy fulfilled with striking accuracy less than 40 years later. Literally every stone of the temple was toppled in 70 AD.
All that remains today is the western wall, which was a part of the outer temple complex and not of the temple buildings themselves. Jesus goes into greater detail about the destruction of Jerusalem and his temple in verses 15 to 28.
So let's skip forward there for a little bit. It says in verse 15, So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place, let the reader understand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. The abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel is a reference, surprise, to the book of Daniel.
[20:48] Daniel 9, verse 27, Daniel 11, 31, and 12, 11, all of which prophesy that someone who will, that someone will come who will desecrate and defile the temple of God, an abomination that makes desolate.

Most pastors and theologians agree that the first referent of Daniel's original prophecy was fulfilled in the second century BC by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV.
He arrogantly called himself Epiphanous, meaning God made manifest, claiming to be God. He plundered the temple of God and then he halted the Jewish daily sacrifices and then he set up a pagan altar, most likely to Zeus, inside the temple of God and then sacrificed an unclean animal, a

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pig on it, that the Jews deemed ceremonially unclean.
But why then is Jesus referring to Daniel's prophecy which pointed to, which a figure that predated him by 200 years? Biblical, prophetic, and apocalyptic literature employs multiple types and patterns of figures that repeat throughout history.
For example, in Revelation 2.14, it says that some people in the New Testament church of Pergamum follow the teaching of Balaam, even though Balaam is a pagan seer from Israel's days in the wilderness in Numbers.
[22:17] Similarly, Revelation 2.20 says that the church in Thyatira tolerated that woman Jezebel, even though Jezebel is the idolatrous queen from the days of Elijah, the king Ahab.

So in a similar way, Jesus is employing this prophetic type, the prophetic pattern of Antiochus IV to speak of another defiling of the temple that is coming.
But this time, the abomination of desolation will not merely desecrate. It will completely destroy the temple. So I take this to be a reference to the Roman general Titus who destroys Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD.
The parallel account in Luke 21.20 confirms this interpretation. I think I have a parallel verses to show for that. Luke 21.20 explicitly states that the desolation that Jesus is speaking of is caused by armies that surround Jerusalem.
That's exactly what happened in 70 AD. That's when Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple was destroyed and it was never built again. This is a terrible time for God's people. Jesus says in verse 21, for then there will be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.
[23:34] This sounds like a singular, unprecedented, great tribulation, right, that will never be repeated again and because of that many people assume that Jesus is here speaking of an end time, never before seen, great tribulation that will immediately precede the second coming of Christ.

But I don't think that's actually the case for several reasons. First, we talked already about how this is a reference to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. If this were a prophecy about the end of the world, then the phrase that nothing like this will happen in the world again doesn't really make sense.
The prophecy assumes that history will continue after this event. Second, the expression, as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be, it's a Hebrew idiom.
It's a rhetorical superlative, hyperbole, you might say, that's common in the Old Testament. Exodus 10, 13 to 14, Joel 2, 2, and Daniel 12, 1, all use similar language.
Third, Jesus is echoing the language of Ezekiel 5, 9, where God decrees the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian empire. And he says this, and because of all your abominations, I will do with you what I have never yet done and the likes of which I will never do again.
[25:02] Exact same language that he used with the destruction of the Babylon, with the first Jerusalem temple, and now Jesus is repeating that, echoing the language with the second temple.
So all that to say, I don't think this great tribulation is this unique never before, never after event.

It's already happened at least twice according to the Bible. In fact, decades later, Revelation 2, 22, and 7, 14 speak of another great tribulation. I think this too is a pattern that repeats throughout history.
But for the people of God living at the time of the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, the tribulation would have felt truly singular and unprecedented. And 3rd century church historian Eusebius notes that the church in Jerusalem knew to flee when trouble started brewing in Jerusalem because of this prophecy.
And they were able to survive the destruction of Jerusalem by fleeing to the mountains, heeding Jesus' words. This remarkable prophecy prompts the disciples to ask Jesus privately in verse 3 tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?
Note that there are two different questions here. And conflating these two different questions has led to a lot of interpretive confusion. So we need to distinguish these two questions carefully.
[26:25] The first question is, when will these things be? What do they mean by these things? It's the destruction of the temple that Jesus just spoke of. Second question is, what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

The disciples do not yet fully understand the import and the implications of this question, but if the destruction of the temple portends the beginning of the end, the beginning of the birth pains, as

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Jesus says in Matthew 24, 8, the sign of Christ's coming and the end of the age is speaking of the end of the end.
Jesus answers that first part of their question first. When will these things be? When will the temple be destroyed? When will this age of the temple come to an end and give way to a new age?
All three of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, mention the same four signs. First, the deception of the false Christs. Second, wars and rumors of wars.
Third, earthquakes and famines. Fourth, tribulation and gospel witness to all nations. But notice, this is important, that Jesus doesn't say that these signs will mark the end.
[27:43] Jesus says repeatedly that they do not mark the end. Matthew 24, verse 6. Look at it with me. For this must take place, but the end is not yet.

Did you see that? Matthew 24, verse 8. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. These are not signs of the end. This is why I like to call these the non-signs of the end or the false alarms of the end.
All pregnant women go through what is called Braxton Hicks contractions. All the pregnant women know. Congrats, by the way.
Justin and Janine just gave birth to their son, James. I don't know if you guys saw that. Yeah. And the Braxton Hicks contractions are known sometimes as false labor or practice labor.
It's like warm-up exercises to prepare the uterus for true labor. And these four non-signs are like the Braxton Hicks contractions. They are not the signs of the end of the end.
[28:55] Rather, they mark the beginning of the end. Sometimes, Christians who are troubled by world events that they see in the news, wars, natural disasters, pandemics, they've asked me over the years, Sean, do you think this means we are living in the end times?

And I always tell them, yes, we are. And we've been living in it since the first coming of Christ.
Remember Peter's sermon in Acts 2. He says that the last days prophesied of in Joel 2 have come upon them. The last days are already here. Began with the ascent of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit.
And so these are, don't panic, so when you read in the newspapers of all these wars and rumors of wars and famines and earthquakes happening, these are false alarms. And then skip ahead briefly with me to verses 32 to 35.
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 all these things, you know that he is near at the very gates.
[30:09] 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.

Some people think that Jesus was wrong in his prediction of his return since he says here that this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
And that hasn't happened. Jesus hasn't come back yet. But pay attention to what exactly Jesus said would take place during the lifetime of that generation. all these things.
What are all these things? Look at verse 33. When you see all these things, you know that he is near. All these things that take place within the generation of Jesus' lifetime are the things that mark, the signs that mark Jesus' nearness.
Like the fig tree putting out its leaves and indicating that the summer is near. These are signs that tell us that Jesus is near, not signs that tell us that Jesus is here. These are signs of nearness, not hereness.
[31:17] The phrase all these things is not inclusive of the second coming of Christ. In fact, the phrase all these things is used very carefully by Matthew throughout chapters 23 and 24.

Remember earlier he said in chapter 23 verse 36, all these things will come upon this generation.
And then again in chapter 24 verse 8, all these are but the beginning of the birth pains.
The all these things that will take place before that generation of Jesus passes away are the destruction of the temple and these four non-signs of the end. So let's take these four false alarms in order.
History records all four of these things happening throughout the days of Jesus. Earthquakes in Asia Minor, Palestine, Jerusalem, widespread famine that Acts 1128 records and Jewish Roman historian Josephus records widespread persecution as Christians bear witness.

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These Braxton Hicks contractions have been going on ever since. There are many false Christs in Jesus' day and there are many false Christs today. Think of Sergei Torop, the former Russian traffic cop who founded the Church of the Last Testament in Siberia in 1991 and claimed to be the reincarnation of Christ.
[32:28] Gathered thousands of followers until he got arrested for abusing them. Think of Lee Man-hee, the South Korean leader of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus or the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony.

He claims to be Jesus' successor and the only person who can rightly interpret the book of Revelation. His cult is active here in Boston. They've tried and failed to recruit two of our own church members.
Have you guys heard of any of these people before? You guys have some of them. I mean, many of you probably have never heard of them before. And if you haven't heard of them, that's one reason to know that they are certainly not the second coming of Christ.
Why? Because Jesus says in verse 23, if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ or there he is, do not believe it.
Why? He says in verses 27 to 20, for as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.
[33:34] If you've ever seen the lightning light up the sky when you're outside, you know that no one can miss that if you're outside and you're not blind. Jesus' coming will be the same way.

When he comes back, it's not going to be some secret thing that happens somewhere that only a select few people see and then spread the word to everybody else. No, when he comes back, everyone will know.
He will be unmissable. The fourth and final non-sign is witness in the midst of persecution. Jesus says in verse 9 that his followers will be delivered up to tribulation and put to death, be hated by all nations for his namesake.
And notwithstanding this hatred of all the nations, Jesus says in verse 14 that this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations.
Notice that parallel. Persecution by all nations. Hatred by all nations. Testimony to all nations. They go hand in hand. They always coexist side by side.
[34:45] Similarly, note the contrast between verses 10 to 12 and verse 13. Many will fall away. Many will be led astray. Love of many will grow cold.

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. The repetition of the word many stands in stark contrast to the singular one.
The one who endures to the end will be saved. So don't be among the many who are led astray. Among the many whose love will grow cold. Many who will go after false criats.
Don't be among the many. Be the one who endures to the end. Enter by the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter through it are many for the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few.
Verse 14 where Jesus says the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come. this has been misinterpreted by many causing confusion speculation surrounding foreign missions and its connection to Christ's second coming.
[36:02] This verse is often understood in mission circles as a mandate to reach all sociolinguistic ethnic people groups with the gospel because until that happens they claim Christ will not return.

For example there are missions organizations that tell us that there are presently 189 unengaged unreached people groups left in the world and that once they reach the remaining ethnic groups with the gospel that Christ will return.
But this popular definition of ethnic people groups wasn't formalized until 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization.
are we to believe that Christians for 1900 years did not fully understand the exact nature of the Great Commission until the rise of the modern sociological understanding of people groups?
They define unreached peoples as meaning less than 2% of their populations being Christians. I want to ask who came up with that arbitrary number? I think this is too mechanical of a way to think about the Great Commission.

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[37:17] In fact I think we have reasons to think from the Bible itself that the gospel of the kingdom has already been proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations. Why do I think that?

Acts 1.8 says you will be my witnesses! in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. that verse functions as a thesis statement of the entire book of Acts.
I think I have the outline the structure of the book of Acts to show. In chapters 1-7 of Acts they're in Jerusalem. In chapters 8-9 they're in Judea and Samaria. In chapters 10-28 they're in the end of the earth.
In chapter 2 in that first part in Jerusalem the Holy Spirit falls on the Jewish believers. In chapter 8 the Holy Spirit falls upon the Samaritan believers. In chapter 10 the Holy Spirit falls upon the Gentile believers.
What is Luke trying to tell us with this outline? The gospel is going from Jerusalem to all Judea and Samaritans to the ends of the earth. It's going from Jews to Samaritans to the Gentiles.
[38:19] That's why Paul writes in Colossians 1 that the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing in the whole world he says. He says that the gospel has already been proclaimed in all creation under heaven in Romans 16-26.

So then while the sign of the gospel going forward to all the nations does indeed precede Jesus' second coming it does not precipitate Jesus' second coming.
Hastening the return of Christ is not the biblical motivation for missions. 2 Peter 3 11-12 is the only verse in scripture that speaks of hastening the coming of the Lord and it mentions nothing of evangelization of ethnic people groups.
It says wait for that day by living in holiness and godliness and thereby hasten the coming of the Lord. Now I say all that but let me quickly add that this does not at all mean that we should not be zealous for evangelism and foreign missions.
We should be. I think we have a brother visiting from Minneapolis as Lucas is training to be a missionary. Matea and David have hearts to go into missions.
[39:41] The great commission is still binding on us. The desire to see God worship among all nations still impels us to go into missions.

I was talking to Jordan earlier this week when he lived in Thailand for two years he could not go to church because there wasn't a church.
That's tragic. Our God deserves to be worshipped by every tribe.
His praise should be on every tongue. He deserves to be worshipped by every tribe. It's a tragedy that there are places where Christ is not named.
People are perishing apart from Christ and they need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and so we should share Apostle Paul's ambition to preach the gospel not where Christ has already been named but especially where Christ is not named so that those who have never been told of him will see and those who have never heard will understand.
[41:03] Romans 15 20 to 21. According to 2 Peter 3 9 our Lord Jesus tarries in his return because he's being patient not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance.

The fact that Jesus hasn't returned yet means that there are still more people left that God intends to gather and save for himself. It is our God-given commission to go to those people so yes go go to the unreached people groups.
I pray to God that he will raise up missionaries from our church to go to all 12 of the nations that we pray for throughout the year but don't think but don't think that your missions work don't think about missions in a presumptuous and mechanistic way as if by reaching the unreached we can force Christ's hand and make him return.
If the timing of Christ's return were really up to our efforts then we could very well near know the day and hour of his return can't we? Think about it if there are around 200 people groups left then we know for sure Christ is not coming back today we know for sure Christ is not coming back tomorrow in fact I think we can be fairly certain he's not coming back the rest of 2026 and then if you keep track I mean there are groups that keep track of these things you can check off the people groups one by one ten left nine left eight seven six five four can't you know the day and hour of Christ's return but that contradicts explicitly what Jesus says in chapters 24 to 25 he says no one knows that day and hour and that Christ will come back like a thief in the night at an hour we do not expect he's coming back when we do not expect him so why are we trying so hard to expect and

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figure out and predict the exact time of his coming the final sign that precedes the second coming of Christ is the shaking of the powers of heaven
Matthew 24 29 says immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken and the clause immediately after the tribulation of those days connects this sign with the preceding passage about the desolation of the temple and the great tribulation and because I believe that those days of the tribulation refer to the period leading up to and following the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD I also believe that these heavenly signs have also been fulfilled now you're like now you're a little crazy what do you mean haven't you been outside today the sun is still there the moon is still giving its light how can you possibly say that these things have been fulfilled I used to think that way also so give me a chance here but as I've studied the [44:20] Bible more I've learned that the language of the darkening of the sun and the moon and the falling of the stars of heaven are the classic apocalyptic language describing the fall of great empires and institutions in the Bible for example Isaiah 13 verse 10 describes the downfall of the Babylonian empire in these words for the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light sounds similar prophesying of the fall of Pharaoh in Egypt Ezekiel 32 7-8 says when I blot you out I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon shall not give its light all the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you and put darkness on your land declares the Lord God Jesus is using figurative language of eschatological judgment to speak of the judgment of Israel and the destruction of the temple

I think Peter's sermon at Pentecost confirms this interpretation because he cites Joel 2 28-31 Joel 2 28-31 that Peter cites says explicitly that the sun is being turned to darkness and the moon will be turned to blood and then when Peter cites that in his sermon he says in Acts 2-16 that that prophecy is fulfilled at Pentecost so then by the time that the gospels are written most of these signs have already been fulfilled and that the destruction of the temple is about to be fulfilled when the gospels are written shortly after the gospels are written the destruction of the temple happens in 70 AD then all the birth pains that necessarily precede the return of Christ are fulfilled which means Jesus really can return any day and that fits really well with the passage that
Ed's going to preach on next week in chapter 24 because it's the parables say repeatedly be alert be ready for the surprise return because you do not know the day or the hour he can come back any day new testament consistently teaches us that the coming of Christ is imminent he uses language like this coming of the Lord is at hand behold the judge is standing at the door for the time is near yet a little while and the coming one will come and will not delay the imminence of the Lord's return is what gives us hope in the midst of suffering and enables us to endure through pain and to stay spiritually alert and not become complacent we must live in light of the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ in order for us to be able to endure the tribulations and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom as a hen gathers her brood under her wings
Jesus wanted to gather us up as the people of God he offered to cover us up to offer refuge with his wings to be our shield to hover over us and guide us but we were not willing we spurned him in all our sins we have spurned him we have sped in his face in all our rebellion and desire to live for ourselves and not for God we have rejected him it's our sins that put Jesus on the cross and because of that we rightly deserve desolation Jesus' backside as he walks away from Jerusalem that's all we deserve to see can you imagine that our savior walking away the glory of Yahweh departing from Jerusalem but because
God wanted to make his face to shine upon us again to be gracious to us again to lift up his countenance toward us and give us peace again to save us Jesus climbs up Mount Calvary and dies on the cross for our sins the one who should have gotten a royal welcome with the red carpet rolled out for him hailed as king blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord instead goes up the Mount Calvary and dies the gruesome death of a slave and hung like a strange fruit on that cursed tree bearing our sins and all those who trust in Jesus Christ and believe in his death and resurrection are cleansed by his blood cleansed of all our sins and set apart as a people of God as a precious bride of Christ and that's what we read about earlier in our assurance of pardon from [49:38] Isaiah 62 Jerusalem that was forsaken that was called forsaken that was called desolate God says I will make you the forsaken one the desolate one my delight my bride that's what God has done for us in Jesus Christ Jesus Christ gave himself up for his bride his people for the new

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Jerusalem and redeemed them for himself and that's why Revelation 3 12 says I will write on him who endures to the end in following Christ the name of my God and the name of the city of my God the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven Revelation 21 2 I saw the holy city new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband because of Christ's atoning work and redemptive work we are the new

Jerusalem the once desolate forsaken city that has become the delight of God himself and this love that God has for us is so intimate and so passionate that the only way he can describe it is by comparing it to marital love a husband's exclusive faithful affection for his wife we are chosen and cherished we have to keep this hope of Christ's return alive and fresh in our hearts that's the only way we can endure the tribulations of this life so that we don't suffer as those who do not have hope so let's turn briefly to Christ's return in the consolation of New Jerusalem look at verse 30 and 31 then will appear in heaven the sign of the son of man and 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 and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other this echoes the language of
Zechariah 12 12 which in turn is repeated in revelation 1 7 it's using that language to speak of the second coming of Christ Matthew has already spoken once of angels gathering up the elect in the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13 this is speaking of the second coming of Christ and the final judgment that will take place then at his first coming Christ came in humiliation and obscurity he had no form or majesty that we should look upon him no beauty that we should desire him he was despised and rejected by men a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief he was one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not in his first coming Jesus emptied himself by taking the form of a!
servant His eternal divine glory was veiled from the eyes of man so sinful men who should have cowered before him in fear instead strutted around boastfully before him and people who should have fallen prostrate in worship and awe before him instead turned against him and flogged him and crucified him that was his first coming but not so in his second coming in his second coming on that day we shall see him as he is this is Matthew 24 30 he will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory it's on that day we will finally be vindicated and we can tell all our naysayers I told you I told you my lord is the king I told you he is the son of God I told you he is a sovereign lord who reigns behold him worship him what a long for and welcome sight the return of
Christ will be to the suffering and persecuted church and when he returns it says Christ will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other there will be a loud trumpet call don't imagine the trumpet call like in a marching band that's not the kind of trumpet call it's like a closer referring would be like!
[54:19] the Roman Salpinx or the Jewish shofar have you seen any of those? If you haven't seen it imagine the horn of Gondor from Lord of the Rings it's used only on special occasions like the appearance of God on Mount Sinai or when they are declaring the year of jubilee the year of redemption and emancipation the 50th year or it's used in the Old Testament chiefly as a rallying battle horn and that blast from that ram's horn gathers all of God's people together and when that trumpet is blown the enemies of God on earth will scatter and all those who were weary from the battle fighting against the world the flesh and the devil wondering can I make it another day can I make it another year can I make it another ten years will hear the call of the captain and will know my redemption is here my deliverance is here my captain my king has come and it says that when he comes he will gather us gather his elect from the four winds from one end of the heaven to the other this specific word the

Greek word behind this word gather only occurs here in this passage in all of the gospel of Matthew twice in Matthew 23 37 when Jesus lamented how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing and then once more here in chapter 24 verse 31 he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds will on that day when Christ returns they will all be gathered to him today we are like motherless chicks in some ways harassed by wolves coyotes hyenas in the world bruised and battered and scattered all over the world but one day as it says in 1 Thessalonians 4 16 the Lord Jesus himself will descend from heaven with the cry of command with the voice of an archangel with the sound of the trumpet of

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God and he will grant relief to those who are afflicted inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ I'll close with this final illustration you probably heard the loud raspy piercing scream of a red tail!
If you haven't heard it in real life you've at least heard it in movies because whenever there's a bird of prey soaring like an eagle in a Hollywood film they always substitute the cry of the red tail hawk because it's the most majestic and powerful scream of all birds of prey it's a piercing high pitched scream there's nothing quite like it imagine that bird of prey that piercing scream and cry and then swooping down in high velocity dive upon all the predators bothering its chicks with the cry of command our Christ our Lord will return and when he returns he will scatter all our enemies and he will gather us under his wings and there we will finally find the rest the security the comfort that we long for yet never fully found in this broken sinful world so hold on to that hope brothers and sisters let's pray oh father fill us with hope oh help us to cling to this hope of the return of our king sustain us by it
Lord will you please comfort my brothers and sisters who are weary this morning who is crestfallen this morning lift up their heads lift up their gaze onto you to Christ who is coming who is surely coming who is coming soon oh Lord come soon we wait for you in Jesus name we pray amen

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