

Trials and the End
Mark 13:1-13

It's fitting for what we're covering today in Mark 13, as we begin Mark 13, talking about trials and the end - trials and the end. Mark 13 we are beginning this morning, and it is a popular portion of the life of Christ. In fact, if you were to ask people, of the sermons that Christ gave or of the sermons in the Bible, what are some that come to mind? And perhaps, one of the most popular ones would be the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus in Matthew 5-7. That would definitely be a popular option, but probably not too far behind would be the Olivette Discourse. This is what we have before us, the Olivette Discourse; the sermon that Jesus gave from the Mount of Olives, that happens to be a decent length. It's represented here in Mark. It's in Matthew. It's in Luke as well. But not just because of its popularity, not just because it's in all three of those gospels of the synoptics, but also because of its content, when you think of the Olivette Discourse, perhaps you already know this and you're already thinking this way, you think future. You think end times. You think what is to come - what is down the line.

We really have before us a valuable portion of Scripture, and I don't say it's valuable because it talks about information regarding the future. While it is fun, and that is nice, and there are loads upon loads of just Christians that will give their time to this, just trying to study what is the future when is Jesus coming back and how are these things going to work out. And so, there's speculation and there's kind of basically a dissection of everything you got in the prophets and the book of Revelation and trying to put it all together and make a timeline of how this fits and what it's going to look like and trying to be faithful there. But what we have here is unique because it's Jesus' own words on this. It's Jesus' teaching on His own second coming. It's Jesus' teaching on the end times. We get to go straight to the source, straight to our Lord and Savior about the end times, and it's not just great for that purpose, that it's the teacher, Jesus, that we get to learn from, but for the added and obvious benefit that this is not just information. This not something that we get to read and dial into the storage files in our mind and say good to know. Now, we understand the end times a little better. But this is something that will directly impact you.

You will be impacted, and you will be moved to apply what Jesus says because this is how He teaches. He doesn't teach in a way to give information. He teaches in a way to move people, and that's exactly what we get to find today and the next couple times when we look at this discourse this Olivette Discourse. So, let's begin and look at Mark 13:1-13, the first portion, what we're going to examine of this part of Christ's life. Mark 13:1-13: "And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!' And Jesus said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.' And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?' And Jesus began to say to them, 'See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.' " As you can tell, a passage here filled with trials, filled with suffering, filled with difficulty that we will get into here.

But just to remind you as we get into Mark 13, we have been, really, covering all of chapter 12 which has all been and even a little into the end of chapter 11, one day. This is still Tuesday of Passion Week. This is that final week where Jesus has in His life and ministry on this earth where He comes on down to Jerusalem for the great feast of Passover. It's packed. It's crowded. And He's had controversy after controversy with these religious leaders. He's made them look foolish every time, and it's been a packed and crowded day where Jesus, after defending Himself well, finally got the floor

to begin to teach and expose what was lacking in their understanding and even theology. They didn't get the Messiah. They didn't understand the Messiah to truly be God in human form, to be David's Lord and not just the son of David. And then, after that, Jesus went on the attack which is where we were last time when He used His final opportunity, His last time of teaching in public, His last time to address all those people there, the crowds that were there as well as the leaders and His own disciples.

And what does He emphasize? What does He teach on? He warns them. He warns them of the threat of their own religious leaders. He says, "Beware of the scribes..." These corrupt leaders, they can't be trusted. They cannot be trusted. They are worthless in their leadership. And He calls them out for their practices and their beliefs and what they do. And then, He illustrates it, which is where we left off last time, by pointing to this poor oppressed widow, this poor widow who gave "...everything she had..." all of her livelihood, everything "...she had to live on.", and "...out of her poverty..." and Jesus highlights this as an example of the very thing He's talking about, the corruption among the leadership that was causing such oppression. That was the end of Jesus' public ministry.

Now, we get to shift to His private ministry, His private teaching up until Friday morning when He will be crucified. So, this is where we turn to, and this is how we come to this moment which we know as the Olivette Discourse. Let's begin to break this down looking at verses 1-2, and this is where we see a discussion here about destruction, the destruction more particularly and specifically of the temple that will be discussed, the destruction here of the temple. And of course, this comes up because of an unnamed disciple in verse 1 who takes note of the temple mount and the buildings therein. And he admires - we have admiration in verse 1. This admiration is what brings about this discussion and this topic about the destruction of the temple. Verse 1 again; "And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!' " Admiring what was there, admiring the temple and all its grandeur and glory - this is after all their controversies, after all Jesus' teaching, after His final rebuke there of the scribes, and they're, actually, finally leaving the scene. They're finally leaving the temple. They've been there for everything we've been considering up to this point for a while now, and they're finally leaving the scene, and this is when we

get attention on the building, attention on the complex there of the temple and the temple mount.

So, this really kind of brings up the question, what was the temple like? Because we have an understanding from the Old Testament of the temple that Solomon built. Right? He built a temple, and there were instructions for how it was to look and how it was to be made, but then unfortunately that temple got destroyed. Alright? The Babylonians came and destroyed that temple in 586 BC, and then after seventy years or so, the Jewish people finally came back into the land, and were able to rebuild the walls and rebuild the temple. But then, four hundred years go by of silence, and then we come to the time of the Roman domination with the Jewish people living here. So, what does this temple look like? What does it actually consist of? So, we have some help from some other outside sources like Josephus who was a Jewish historian that was actually tasked to describe and kind of write down by the Romans. He was assigned this task of writing down a history of what was taking place, and so, he gives us some descriptions and helps us out with some of the other things that were happening in the time of Christ.

And so, we kind of have a general understanding of what Herod's temple looked like as they called it because it was helped and funded and built by Herod the Great. And what we find is that it was in fact a wonderful, a massive, a glorious architectural structure. Listen to how Josephus describes this; "Now the outward face of the temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men's minds or their eyes; for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendor, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun's own rays. But this temple appeared to strangers, when they were coming to it at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow; for as to those parts of it that were not gilt, they were exceeding white. On its top it had spikes with sharp points, to prevent any pollution of it by birds sitting upon it. Of its stones, some of them were forty-five cubits in length, five in height, and six in breadth." It's a massive architectural project and structure. It's an enormous feat as Josephus describes it. In fact, as it's known in kind of this time and ancient Rome, it's one of the wonders of ancient Rome that they have this temple here.

And then, you even look in John 2:20 and we find out that it took about forty-six years to build, forty-six years for this project. This was not some simple project as we saw at the end of the Old Testament where they came back, and they said, well, here's some rubble of what's left of the temple. Let's salvage it and kind of make another make-shift temple that's not as great as Solomon's. No. Since then, we've had some clear and obvious upgrades because this is an enormous, not just massive, but also glorious temple and building. So, this is what they're seeing, and this is why this unnamed disciple calls attention to this. How often do they go to Jerusalem? How often are they actually there? It's not very often, and so, it's on this kind of rare occasion, that they're down there for Passover, that he calls attention to this beautiful structure. Kind of interesting though because we don't have it in Mark's account, but in Matthew's account, when Jesus was leaving and finishing up His rebuke of the scribes, one of the last things Jesus said publicly to all the people in the temple was in Matthew 23:38; "See, your house is left to you desolate." As a way of saying this is something that is going to happen, your house here will be "...left to you desolate." And then you have this disciple making this observation which is kind of funny. After Jesus made that statement in Matthew, then you have the disciple saying what a beautiful place; "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!"

Well, this leads Jesus to be able to then speak to this. Right? And so, in verse 2, we talk about the annihilation of this temple structure and complex, the annihilation and in fact its destruction; "And Jesus said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.'" Jesus comes back pretty fiery. Alright? He comes back and just completely states the truth and the obvious fact that really in about forty years after Jesus says this, you're going to have the Romans come in in 70 AD, and they're going to destroy this place, and they're going to take pains. They're going to take time, not just weeks, not just months, they're going to take years potentially to try and destroy this temple building and complex. Alright? This is going to be a massive undertaking to destroy this beautiful architectural kind of building and complex, but that's what will take place in history, and that's what we find out, and there will be an overturning of these stones and a massive undertaking of laying siege to the Jerusalem temple specifically.

It's, you know, interesting because it's up in the hills. Jerusalem's located up in the hills, so it's already hard just to get up in there to attack whoever lives up there, and then when you encounter such a glorious structure you kind of think let's just let it be, and we'll take it over. But that's not the case. They go through all this work and effort to go up into the hills to bring the equipment necessary to dismantle this building and to destroy it. This would be a massive undertaking. Right? If you were to go to Israel, and you go to Jerusalem and check out what's left there of the temple mount and what is the new kind of temple mount and what's associated there on the bottom, you still have leftover some of these massive stones that were thrown over the top, that were obviously dislodged and removed from the top of the temple mount and the other buildings beyond the temple, that were up there like Solomon's portico and things of that nature. And so, you can go and see some of these stones still there as a testimony to this very fact. This is what the Romans did. They came and just laid siege and destroyed this just as Jesus said; "There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." Alright? A massive, massive destruction - in fact, some of these stones as they came were actually like shattering the ground and then even going through into the tunnels that were underneath the ground. You can still go through some of those tunnels today, but this is just showing just how massive these stones were, and when you kind of throw them off the temple mount, you're going to obviously cause some damage. So, this took place.

Jesus as a true prophet of God as one who speaks the truth encounters this and basically qualifies Himself again as one who speaks the truth because He testifies ultimately to what is their destruction. I mean it kind of makes sense right? You think about everything we've just encountered in chapter 12 and how He's exposed the corruption of these people. He's shown just how they have fallen short they've been found wanting as God's faithful people and leadership and so what's going to be a fitting appropriate punishment for that? These Romans coming in the year 70 and destroying this temple building and complex as He says. So this is how it kicks it off but it's because of this comment it's because of this picture it's because of this topic of the destruction of the temple that we then launch. It becomes the stepping stone for launching into future events for talking about the end times and that's what we're going to discover a little bit more as we go through here.

So, let's look at verses 3-8, and we see some of the distractions that will come in the end times, some of the distractions, some things that will come almost posing to be the end but not quite, and this comes up because of what the disciples do in verses 3-4, and that's where we learn of their expectation, the disciples' expectation. The disciples' expectation is what leads them to continue this conversation, and ultimately what opens the door for Jesus to give this sermon and to give us this information and knowledge about the end, about the future. Looking at verse 3; "And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?'" So, this prompts more discussion, more questions which will lead to Jesus' sermon here. And as you can tell, we've changed scenes officially now. Right? As we began in verses 1-2, we were just exiting the temple structure. We're still in the temple, still in Jerusalem, but now when we come to verse 3, we see that they're sitting on the Mount of Olives. Right? They've actually made their way. They've progressed.

As Jesus has kind of made this prophecy and prediction about the destruction of the temple, it's given the disciples some time to kind of mull this over, and in their thinking, in their theology and their understanding of Scripture, they're thinking there's more to this. Because we know, we have some understanding of Scripture here that when there's a destruction of the city or the destruction of the temple, that's connected to end times things, that's connected to somehow God coming back, that's connected to the kingdom that will come and be established. And so, that's what motivates them to engage now and to have this discussion. It's fitting that they have this discussion on the Mount of Olives because it's not far from the temple. It's not far from Jerusalem. It's not far from where they just came from, actually. Right? So if you're kind of like in Jerusalem here, and this is you on the temple mount. Right now, looking out just east, you get the Mount of Olives which kind of looks like a hill, the hill of olives. You're already up in the mountains, so you're already up in some elevation. There's some rolling hills all around, but at this point, the Mount of Olives is only about maybe a hundred and fifty feet higher than where you would be at the temple mount.

So, they didn't go far. Right? All they did was they went east. They crossed over the Kidron Valley. They went up to the Mount of Olives, and there they are. They're now having this discussion, and in this discussion, they have a

perfect view in plain sight of the temple, not the Dome of the Rock obviously. Right? But this is them, and how close they are to what is taking place there on the temple mount. They would see Herod's temple. They would see the people even there. They would see the business and activity. This is when we have this discussion, this discussion about the end, this discussion about what is to come and specifically in regard to God's people, Israel. So, it's fitting that they are opposite the temple as our text says because they're just on the Mount of Olives, not far away at all, looking at where they just came from, looking at this temple from a grander view. It's Peter, James, John, and Andrew who come up. The initial four that Jesus called back in Mark 1 when He called them to be His disciples are now coming with this question. Alright? They're coming privately and asking Him to kind of help them out with understanding what else is going to take place because this sounds like end times talk. And it's potentially true that Jesus, in responding to them, responded in such a way that all the disciples heard it and not just the four of them.

In verse 4, we see their question; "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" So, they ask two questions here. First, "...when will these things be...?" And then, that's followed up with "...what will be the sign [that will proceed them]?" What heads-up will we have? What notification will we get? How will know about this? So, it's a question of when and what sign to proceed it. So, first of all, we've got to realize, how do we know? How do we know that these disciples are asking about the end times? How do we know that they aren't just asking about the destruction of the temple and that's it? How do we know that it's actually more than just the destruction of the temple but actually all the end and everything that will unfold after it (that is the establishment of the kingdom and Jesus reigning and actually Israel actually being exalted above all other nations and nations coming to them)? How do we know that that's all connected to the destruction of the temple? Well, in reality, the Old Testament actually hints at this. The Old Testament tells us this. This is what they expected when they looked ahead, and they understood the prophets, and they thought through what was to come next and what was coming in God's plan for His people.

They knew a kingdom was coming. They were excited for that kingdom. Obviously, they were the recipients of that, and they would be able to be there and to experience that wonderful time, but they also knew that that

kingdom wouldn't come until this suffering came first, until this tribulation comes first, like in Daniel 9:26. We read, "And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." This was what is to come; "Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed." This was the expectation, that this must come. In fact, to even kind of put it more clearly, you can go to a passage like Zechariah 14 and you see the progression here. Look at verses 1-2; "Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken..." That's terrible. Alright? That is a terrible time of suffering and tribulation, and then verse 3, "Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle." And if you keep reading in Zechariah 14, you see the establishment and setup of the kingdom. That's what is to come and all the blessings through that. So, this is how they thought. This is how Jewish people were understanding the Old Testament, just taking it for what it says, thinking about their future and realizing we can't wait for that kingdom. We can't wait for the Messiah to come and rule and reign over all the nations and we get to rule with Him. But we know that there has to be some hard times first. There has to be some tribulations some trouble that takes place first as these verses point out.

So, when these disciples hear Jesus talking about the destruction of the temple, it flips a switch in their head. It makes them remember. It makes them realize we know that there is trouble to come, but after that there is then glory and kingdom. And so, that's why they come to Jesus with this request, "...when will these things be..." because they're thinking of more than just the destruction of the temple. They're thinking of glorious kingdom and the Messiah reigning; "...and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" You can even see it in what they say; "Tell us, when will these things..." They don't say tell us when will this happen, this event of the destruction of the temple. They know there's more connected to it. You get the destruction. You get the trouble. You get the tribulation. And you get all these other things attached to it, the blessings that follow, the kingdom that follows. So, that's what they're asking here, and to be honest, if we just look at the parallel passage in Matthew, then we actually realize that they were wanting to know more than just the destruction of the temple as Matthew 24:3 states, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" This is their expectation. Their expectation is Jesus mentioned the

destruction of the temple and that got them thinking, that got them thinking about the end, that got them thinking about what is to come and what will take place. And so, they bring this to Jesus, and it allows for Him to answer and start to address what will take place, what is to come, and what they can expect. This is what kicks it all off.

So, we get to verses 5-8, and Jesus begins by acknowledging those things that aren't actually quite future, that aren't actually the end times and "...the end of the age..." but things that come before it. These are the distracting events – the distracting events in verses 5-8. Listen to it as Jesus says it; "And Jesus began to say to them, 'See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.'" So, Jesus just makes it clear in those two statements that "...the end is not yet." Even though these things are taking place, "...the end is not yet." It's a mere distraction, and even though these things are taking place, they "...are but the beginning of the birth pains." And as labor goes, these birth pains, they only increase in magnitude and power and also in frequency. And so, He is just alluding to the very beginning of it. Alright? This isn't actually the end of the age.

So, He lists these several events and occurrences that will take place first. There will be false messiahs. Verse 6; "Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray." Alright? "Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray." Some will actually come in the name and identity of Christ or Jesus or of Messiah, and they're actually going to "...lead many astray." They're actually going to be effective. They're going to be imposters, and it's going to work. Alright? People are actually going to follow them. You actually find this if you look in history a little bit, just even after Christ, and as the Romans came and destroyed the city, and even after that, you had this taking place. You had even some Jewish people coming up and claiming to be Messiah, claiming to be leader, and it worked for a time. They got people that actually started to follow them, and they got a following, and they tried to make their own rebellion, and then they were squashed completely. And then, people realized, well, he obviously wasn't the Messiah. And someone else pops up

and says I'm the Messiah, and people followed him, and then he was squashed. It wouldn't be long before they were all revealed, and they were all shut down and revealed not to in fact be Messiah, but just simply imposters.

I mean, in fact in recent years and even the current day, you have this from time to time. People speak up, and they make the news in kind of more wacky headlines of someone claiming to be Jesus or someone claiming to be Messiah. And it's almost laughable. Right? It's kind of this thing where it's like, seriously? Yeah? I mean, everyone just has a hard time taking that claim with any kind of relevance or seriousness. But if you were to jump ahead and look in the book of Revelation, and you realize what will take place, and you will have leaders like the anti-Christ and leaders like the false prophet, and you will not just have people that are good leaders and able to speak well and able to get a lot of people underneath them and follow them, but they'll actually be doing signs and wonders and all these abilities. It's going to be affective. It's going to work, and people are going to actually follow, and it's going to be the greatest deception. Alright? It's actually going to happen.

Jesus just doesn't just say that there will be false messiahs, He says second there will be increased warfare; "And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." The disciples could be led astray by the fact of "...wars and rumors of wars..." It's very clear that wars must take place as Jesus says, but it's also clear that when there is talk of wars and when wars actually do take place, people are on edge. People are absolutely disturbed. People think this is the end of the world. This is the end as we know it. This is it. But Jesus is so clear here; "...but the end is not yet." These things will take place. It's a distraction. It's not in fact the end of the age. It's obviously not just notable in how the Romans came and did their destruction, and they did their warfare, but there's been that for the last two thousand years. There's been warfare. It's been clear, tons of evidence, even in Revelation 6, if you were to look at the seal judgments that happen there, we recognize that one of the seals will be increased warfare in the end as the labor pains increase, as we get closer to the birth of the kingdom. So, if you think warfare is bad now, it's just going to continue and the "...rumors of wars..." will just continue and explode and get greater in magnitude and in proportion. That's what's to come, but notice

what He says, "...do not be alarmed" ... "...do not be alarmed." This is how you ought to respond. Don't fall for this distraction. Don't get swept away in it; "...do not be alarmed."

Third, there will be natural disasters, and then Jesus says something that's specific for a Californian audience. Alright? He says, "There will be earthquakes in various places..." This is the one example used here that's very specific for us. People have a sense of fear and urgency when they realize and they get kind of more information like we have in this time and age, and so we recognize more quickly, and we actually have more info to know of all the natural disasters that are taking place, and it puts people on edge even there, and they think, wow, what is this world coming to? What is taking place, these frequent waves of devastation that are coming upon us? But even so, these natural disasters, like earthquakes, they too will increase as these birth pains increase in approaching Christ's return at the end. It's the same idea. You think there's a lot of warfare? You haven't seen anything yet. You think there's a lot of natural disasters? Just you wait. It's going to increase and get worse. These are just merely distractions.

Fourth, there will be economic crisis; "...there will be famines." As He says, famines are naturally results of economic crises, and this is recognized. It's been recognized throughout time. It's still is recognized as people try and solve the need of world hunger, and people recognize that there are economic breakdowns everywhere around the globe. But once again, you look at Revelation 6, and you see part of the sealed judgments is increased economic woes. As the end draws near, it will only get worse. These distractions must not be the focus. They can't be. We've got to put them in perspective. What's the perspective? They're but the beginning of birth pains, just the beginning. While people respond, and they have their moments of panic and disaster when they see things happening and they start to put it all together, Jesus has already made it clear to us; it's just the beginning, "...the end is not yet." This is just the beginning of birth pains. That greater degree of intensity will be unmistakable labor that comes when the sealed judgments of Revelation 6 come upon this earth.

Notice, for us, the clear commands that we have in these verses; "See that no one leads you astray." And "...do not be alarmed." That's you. That's your responsibility, not to get swept away in headlines, not to get swept away in fear but to, in the opposite, to actually refrain from being alarmed and draw

near to God as your rock and refuge. Alright? And to see that no one leads you astray in thought and speculation and frantic disarray about what this world is coming too. You know that's a statement that's often muttered and stated so often, not just by unbelievers but by believers too. And the reality is we know exactly what this world is coming to. Why say that phrase? It's an easy phrase to say, but the reality is we know. We have it. It's been revealed. We know what this world's coming to so let's stop being alarmed by it. Let's rise up and boldly fulfill our mission which is exactly what is stated in the next verses here.

After these distractions, Jesus then goes on to deal with what will be realistic and very personal difficulties for them to come in verses 9-13, difficulties that will come, difficulties that are in store for not just the disciples but the church as a whole even. In verses 9-11, we deal with the first difficulty mentioned here, being handed over to proclaim - being handed over to proclaim in verse 9; "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." Jesus identifies the reality of persecution for these disciples. Look at how it's described, "For you will be interrogated by councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings..." Alright. If you kind of think about just those three descriptions there, and you can kind of think of the book of Acts even already, the early church going through those things, "...deliver you over to councils..." Sounds like Paul before the Sanhedrin when he had to give his defense, and he's arrested, "...beaten in synagogues..." Sounds like Paul and Barnabas at Lystra and how they had to go through that difficulty and ultimately get stoned and try and come back into the city and keep preaching. How about "...stand before governors and kings..."? Think about what Paul had to do in testifying before all three, Phelix, Festus, and then Agrippa. And then, he appealed to Caesar, and he got sent on a boat to go to Rome. Alright? All these things that Jesus says are very obvious and clear, just even in the book of Acts what has taken place.

Jesus says that this happens ultimately. Why? "...for my sake..." The purpose will be "...to bear witness before them." This isn't just persecution

for the sake of persecution. This isn't just hard times because God feels like giving you hard times, and it's not even just for the sake of sanctifying you which it in fact does. It makes you more like Christ, but even greater, you will have this moment to proclaim truth, to bear witness, to testify to Jesus Christ, the way the truth and life. What is the command that Jesus gives? "But be on your guard." In other words, be ready. Don't be surprised by this. Peter will say that; "...do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes..." Paul will say, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..." And Jesus has already given us the command, "But be on your guard." You know this is coming. You know this is coming your way. You need to be ready for it, and then you need to engage it as He says in verse 10; "And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations." This is your moment. This is your responsibility. This is your task, preach, bring the good news to all the nations. Don't just limit it anymore to Jerusalem. Don't limit it to Israel and Galilee. Go out. This must go. In fact, God will have to give the persecution to the church as we've seen in the book of Acts to send them out, to get them to go and proclaim good news to the nation.

And so, this statement here in verse 10 makes it very clear that there's a priority. The priority must first rest upon the gospel being preached to the world. That's what needs to take place. This fits really well with what Jesus says at the end of His life, some of the last words that He gets to reserve for His time on earth before He ascends into heaven is the Great Commission; "Go therefore and make disciples..." Alright. This is what you are to do, "...of all nations..." This is your time. Be my witnesses. Where? All over the world, not just here. This is fitting exactly with their task and what they ought to do and what Jesus told them multiple times. This is where they lived. This is where you and I still live in this time where we are waiting for and anticipating the end, the return of Christ. But it has not happened yet, has it? So, what's our responsibility? Don't over think it. Proclaim to the nations, that's it. That's your priority. That is what is first in God's mind. That is first in Jesus' mind. These things are going to happen, "...wars and rumors of wars..." famine, economic tough times. These things are coming at you. Be ready for them. Persecution? Yep, it's heading your way, but what do you need to remember again? Proclaim - proclaim this good news. This is what this is all for. It's an opportunity for you to bring truth to people that need it.

That's why He sets verse 10 in here right between verse 9 and 11. Verse 11 goes right back into the persecution again; "And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." And it was the Holy Spirit that encouraged these men in the establishment of the early church. It's the Holy Spirit that continues to encourage us as He indwells us that we can be bold and preach the Word of God, the truth about Jesus Christ. It was the Holy Spirit that allowed the apostles to say we must obey God rather than men. It's the Holy Spirit that worked through Paul to say I'm on trial for belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's the Holy Spirit to embolden Paul to actually appeal to Caesar so that he might go farther in taking this good news throughout the world and the nations. This is our responsibility. People love to get carried away with the details of end times, and they love the information, and they love the timeline, and they set it all up in their mind, and they love to have the facts. But here is the practical takeaway, the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. How are you doing at that? You can have all the knowledge you want, but we need to be proclaiming the gospel. Don't over think it. Take the message of Christ and take it boldly to the world.

Jesus ends with even more discouraging talk while giving promises to accommodate it. In verses 12-13, we learn that they are hated yet persevering. These apostles will be hated yet persevering. In verse 12; "And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.' " This persecution is so obvious and evident. It's not just in the sense of different ruling authorities and the Jewish authorities and the Jewish rulers in Sanhedrins and counsels and even the gentile rulers and kings and governors, but it even extends to their own households. Jesus in fact said this in His teaching and His ministry, that He didn't "...come to bring peace, but a sword." He came to divide. Jesus is the dividing line. He is the point where all of mankind divides at the cross, either in hatred of Jesus or in bowing down in worship of Him. This is a severe persecution that becomes intensely personal in their own family. Getting handed over to death, and granted this is obvious, it is not for some reason of sin or misconduct or preference even because you prefer something and someone else prefers another thing, this is clear. It is because of Christ; "...you will be hated by all for my name's sake," because of our identity with Christ. Jesus gives the ultimate comfort

for people trying to follow Him; “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

Jesus gives this difficult promise, “And you will be hated by all for my name's sake.” But endurance will pay off. Perseverance for these disciples means salvation for their souls. Perseverance means salvation. It's comfort to know that it is well, and it will be well with their soul. How can you identify the true followers of Christ? Well, they're the ones that aren't just falling off the wagon. They're the ones that aren't just dropping like flies. As time's progressing here, everyone sees the headlines. Everyone sees what we're experiencing, and we know from God's own words, He told us it's going to get worse. So, who are the true followers? The ones who don't flinch and fade in the midst of all this, but the ones that double down in their efforts to preach good news, the ones that remain close to God, the ones that endure and persevere. This is not Jesus trying to say that, you know, you can earn your salvation if you try hard enough and work hard enough 'til the end. He's simply saying, you want to know what the people that are saved look like? They're the ones that make it, the ones that God has chosen to represent Him and to be His ambassadors upon this earth, the ones that are truly His. They make it. Throw anything you want at them. Throw all the persecutions and trials, throw all the calamity of natural disasters and even political tough times and everything like this, and they will persevere. They will endure to the end.

This is the beginning of Jesus' teaching about what is to come, and as you can tell this is just the beginning. This is just the tiniest beginning of birth pains and labor. This is something that will blow up in magnitude and frequency. Read Revelation 6 and the sealed judgments and the beginnings of it, and you will see what the tribulation actually brings. This is what we're going to cover next time in verse 14 and on. We will see the great tribulation, the difficulty that will come when the end does actually come upon this earth and the calamity that that will bring. Until then, what's your responsibility? Not to have facts, not to have knowledge about the end - don't settle for that. Don't settle for your ability to know how all these events go in order. Know that because God has revealed it to you. And do something about it. Remain committed to proclaiming this good news, not just here but to the nations. Let us work together as a whole to do this and be faithful to our king.