

Jesus and the Future

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[0 : 00] As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Look, teacher, what massive stones, what magnificent buildings.

Do you see all these great buildings? replied Jesus. Not one stone here will be left on another. Every one will be thrown down. As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled? And continuing on from verse 28. Now learn this lesson from the fig tree.

As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door.

Truly, I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

[1 : 13] But what about that day or hour? No one knows. Not even the angels in heaven, nor the sun, but only the Father. Be on guard. Be alert.

You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away. He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with assigned tasks, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back, whether in the evening or at midnight, or when the cock roars or at dawn.

If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone, watch. Thank you.

It's a great privilege to be here, everybody. Thank you. It's very brave of you to have an Australian come to visit. And I don't know if you have heard before the story of the Australian going to the optician, and the optician asks him to put his right hand over his left eye and read the chart up on the wall.

[2 : 23] And the Australian can't remember which is his right hand or his left eye. And the optician sees he's having trouble, so he runs out the back and finds an old Kellogg's cornflake box and cuts a hole in it and pulls the box over his head and says, how's that?

The Australian says, it's not too bad, but I was hoping to get steel frames like my brother. I tell you that partly because what we're going to do just when we've prayed is we're going to look at a passage of Scripture which operates like a telescope.

It's a passage where Jesus looks to the immediate future and then to the ultimate future. And so we might pray that the Lord helps us because we are very short-sighted by nature.

Most of you are probably thinking about things like what's happening this week, what's happening next weekend, some deadline you've got for an assignment, some function you're going to.

These are the sort of short-term thing, and by nature we are short-sighted. We need God's Word to be alongside it. Let's pray. Our loving Father, as we come to this portion of your Word, we pray that what we know not, you would teach us, that what we have not, you would give to us, and what we are not, you would make us.

[3 : 44] We pray, Heavenly Father, that where we are weak, you would show your strength, and where we are foolish, you'd show your wisdom. Where we are dull, you would show your quickening. And I do pray that for each one who's come here this evening, that this Word would do good in comforting or challenging in the right proportion.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Jesus predicts in Mark chapter 13 that there is a day coming where the city of Jerusalem will be invaded, and it was invaded.

And then He puts the telescope out, and He says, there's going to come a day where the world will be invaded by Him. And because He got the first prediction right, we can be confident that He will

get the second right.

That's the thrust of what we're going to see in this chapter. I'm going to try and get a handle on the whole chapter. It's a very wonderful chapter. It's a very pregnant chapter. It's a very much debated chapter.

Those of you who walk in theological circles may know that this is a chapter about which many people have various views. I'm going to divide it into three points, a standard three-point sermon, which goes like this.

[5 : 01] Jesus is our security. Jesus is our authority. And Jesus is our priority. Our security, our authority, and our priority. S-A-P, sap, as in the sap of a tree.

And when I bump into you after, and you look a little awkward, and I say that you can remember the three points of the talk, you'll look a little awkward. But perhaps you'll remember these three. First of all, Jesus is our security.

Mark 13, verse 1. As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, look, teacher, what massive stones, what magnificent buildings.

And Jesus, verse 2, replied, they will all fall down. They will all be pushed over. Now, that little phrase in verse 1, that Jesus is leaving the temple, is a very loaded phrase, because he never goes back to the physical temple.

It is a very great religious building in his day, but it is no longer important in the plans of God. And I'll tell you two reasons why the temple is no longer important.

[6 : 10] One, it has utterly failed to do its job. It's meant to be a place of truth, and mercy, and a signpost to Jesus. But it has not been a place of truth, it's not been a place of mercy, and it has not been a signpost to the Messiah.

And that's why Jesus, a little earlier, attacked the building, by turning over the tables. He knew that it was empty, and hollow, and hypocritical.

And the leaders of the temple attacked him, by coming to him, and asking again and again difficult questions, to get him into trouble. The second reason why the temple is finished, is because its job is over.

All the sacrifices of the temple were meant to be warm-ups to the real sacrifice of Jesus. And Jesus would bring the great final sacrifice of himself on the cross.

And so Jesus is now wanting people with him to walk away from the temple, and to trust him. It was a great building.

[7 : 16] We're told that it covered three, four, five football fields, stadiums. We're told that the stones, which had been basically levered to the ground, pushed over, some of them were five yards by five yards by ten yards.

Big, big stones. So the disciples are shocked, verse four, and they've got good reason to be shocked, because last time the temple was destroyed, God's people went as prisoners into Babylon.

And now the disciples must be thinking to themselves, if the temple's going to be destroyed, what is happening. But you don't need the temple. You need the new temple, who is Jesus.

And this is very comforting, because you're going to leave this building in a few minutes, and you're going to go home in your car, or on foot, or bicycle, or whatever. And if you go home in fellowship with Jesus Christ, because you trust him, and you belong to him, you have everything.

You have answers to the past, you have answers to the present, and you have answers for the future. You have everything you want. That is, you have everything you need in Christ.

[8 : 27] We've just farewelled my mother-in-law a couple of weeks ago. She was a very godly lady, died in her 90s. And it was really lovely, if you can put it like this, to see a lady die well, farewelling everything that she owed, everything she'd ever collected, but leaving this world with Christ, and going to Christ.

It's a very comforting and wonderful thing. It's also a very challenging thing, that you don't need the temple, you need Christ. Because if you've got the building, but not Christ, you really deserve pity. If you've got knowledge of this building, and you know the songs that are sung, and you drink the coffee that is provided, and you know the minister who works here, but you don't know Christ, you haven't really got anything, which is going to last.

And not too long ago, I sat with a lady who'd been coming to a church for 75 years, and our church for six years, and she had no clue whatsoever about Christ.

So I know it's possible to have the temple, the religion, but not Christ. Now you see, Jesus leaves the temple, it's finished, and soon it's going to be destroyed, and the apostles, the disciples are shocked, and they say, verse four, when will this happen?

[9 : 52] Please tell us the sign. And before Jesus gives any answers to their questions, he tells them, in verses five and following, what is important to him. And what is important to him is not the building.

First of all, what is important to Jesus is that your soul would be safe. Look at verse five. He says, watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming I'm he, and will deceive many.

So Jesus says, you're worried about the temple, and losing the temple. I'm worried that you will lose me. Is it possible for people to walk away from Jesus?

Well, we are aware, aren't we, of lots of people who seem to be walking with Jesus, and then they walk away. Children raised in Christian homes who give up.

People who come to church and give up. And if you think this is not a big issue, just read the letters of the New Testament, and you'll see that in Hebrews, there's a letter to people who want to leave Jesus for the temple again.

[10 : 57] And 2 Corinthians is written to people who want to leave Jesus for celebrity pastors. And Colossians is written to people who want to leave Jesus for mysticism. And Galatians is written to people who want to leave Jesus for law keeping.

And we've seen people, haven't we, come in this world, which is so fundamentally affected by Jesus, and they go for Mary, or Muhammad. It is a big, big issue.

And Jesus says, his first great concern is that your soul would be safe. Second, he says, I want your mind to be clear. Verse 7. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed.

Such things must happen. The end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places and famines. These are the beginning of birth pain.

So, what Jesus is saying, I want your mind to be clear about what is the end of the world. It's not war, earthquake, and famine. War, earthquake, and famine are the marks of this world.

[12 : 04] When the television goes on and you see that a war has begun, it is alarming, but it's not the end of the world. When an earthquake takes place, it is distressing, but it's not the end of the world.

When a famine takes place, it's not the end of the world. This is such an important principle that we've got to get into the habit of saying when these things come, this is the normal world that we live in.

The end, verse 7, is not yet. There are certain Christians who write paperbacks and there are certain Christians who join churches and they say that when there are earthquakes, wars, and famines, that means the end of the world.

Well, Jesus says it's not the end of the world. Thirdly, Jesus says, not only must your soul be safe and your mind be clear, but your strength will be given.

Verse 9 to 11. Especially referring to the disciples of the first century, he says, be on your guard. You'll be handed over to local councils and flogged in synagogues, and on account of me, you'll stand before governors and kings.

[13 : 10] Well, they certainly did. Just within hours, Jesus would do the same. Standing before leaders and giving a good defense of the faith.

But then there would be the apostles, the disciples, who would be arrested and find themselves on trial. You see this in the book of Acts. And Jesus says, verse 10, your top priority first is the gospel. See that in verse 10? And the gospel must first be preached. Some people read that and think it means that Jesus can't return until the gospel has been preached to everybody.

But the context is not in the second coming here. It's in the courtroom. And Jesus is saying that if you find yourself in the courtroom, your priority is not your success.

It's certainly not even your skin that you'll be saving yourself. It is giving the faith. So, your mind, your soul must be safe, your mind must be clear, your strength will be given because Jesus says you won't be deserted at that moment, the Holy Spirit will help you to know what to say.

[14 : 18] This is the context where you've got no time to prepare and you go, you find yourself in the synagogue, dragged in the middle of the night and God himself helps you to speak. And

fourthly, this is what's important to Jesus, your heart belongs to him.

He says, the family may desert you, verse 12, your children, putting their parents to death, unbelievable.

Parents, putting their children to death, unbelievable. But you, even if everybody hates you, says Jesus, stand firm because you belong to me, your heart belongs to me.

So, here is Jesus, our security. He is not so interested in the building being destroyed, but he is interested in the disciples staying with him and having their mind clear about the world and having strength given to them for their witness and for having their heart attached to him safely.

He is our security. Second, he is our authority. Look at verse 14, if you just turn forward a little bit. He says, when you see the abomination that causes desolation, standing where it does not belong, then, verse 14, run to the mountains, run to the hills.

[15:46] This is the verse where Jesus is getting into the details of the attack or the invasion which will take place on Jerusalem. In other words, they've asked him, when will the temple fall to the ground?

And he said, let me first tell you what's important. Now, let's come back to your question, verse 14. This is going to be the sign. And he talks about this abomination which causes desolation.

And you may know, if you know your history, that in AD 70, the Romans came into the city and they basically recreated the abomination that causes desolation.

The prediction came perfectly true. So, he's answering their question, what will be the sign? And the answer to the question is, it's going to be an evil sign.

Abomination that causes desolation means there'll be a kind of a monster which will cause chaos or there'll be some evil which will cause great emptiness. Now, if you're still with me, let me tell you this.

[16:47] This phrase, abomination that causes desolation comes from the Old Testament. It comes from the book of Daniel because Daniel in the Old Testament predicted that there would be an abomination that causes desolation and sometime later after Daniel's life, the Greeks came into the city, into the city of Jerusalem and they came into the temple and they sacrificed a pig on the altar and they basically gave homage to Zeus as if shaking their fist at Yahweh and so Daniel predicted an abomination that causes desolation which is really what came true and now Jesus borrows the same phrase and says, in effect, there will be another abomination in the temple and of course, it also came true because not the Greeks this time but the Romans came in and they decimated the city and they stacked all the bodies, the corpses in the temple around the altar.

So there's an Old Testament prediction which comes true and there's a New Testament prediction that comes true and in case you think this is all Old Testament or this is all ancient history, let me tell you that Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2 that it is always the work of the devil to remove things that are glorious to God and put evil in their place and we could think of a thousand examples of how again and again and again what should be honoring to God is replaced with something which is corrupt and evil.

So, what wisdom does Jesus give to his disciples? He says in verse 14, when this thing takes place and it will take place and it did take place, run for the hills.

Forget about your coat, forget about your possessions, come down off the roof, it's going to be very difficult for those who can't run and what Jesus said came true. The Roman forces came in, the Christians who'd been listening to Jesus saw the abomination, fled to the hills and were largely spared.

The Jews who turned their back on the Messiah stayed in the city and were largely killed. They paid a very heavy price. I think that's why Jesus says in verse 19 that the distress will be unequalled, unparalleled, the worst and I think he's talking about it's the worst that Jerusalem will ever experience and it probably was.

[19:15] Now, remember that the city of Jerusalem was not a sweet and innocent city. It had rejected its Messiah. Jesus had come into the city and he had taught in the center, in the temple.

He had healed people. He'd loved the people. He'd invited them. He'd pleaded. He'd wept over them and they took him outside the city and crucified him. So there's nothing left for the city but death.

They've turned their back on the Prince of Life and they received a great, great judgment as a result.

Notice how Jesus warns very lovingly which of course is what love does. Love warns. He says, I want you to be saved. I want you to be spared. I want you to be okay. I want you to run to the hills. The sinful world around us says to the church, please say what we want to hear and tell us that we can do anything and there'll be no consequences.

[20 : 21] This is Genesis 3. We want every tree and we want to be and we want to not die. But the loving believer and the loving church says, the way to live is to make a break with your sin and run to Christ.

Otherwise, you will perish. Lovelessness says, do whatever you like. Love says, leave your sin and take Christ.

Christ. And that's what Jesus is doing here. He's urging people to save or to be safe by running and running to safety. So he urges and he pleads.

He says in verse 20 that God will cut short the days because of his mercy and he keeps on saying verse 21, watch out for the deceivers who come along at these certain times and promise you all sorts of shortcuts and easy answers and never deliver.

So Jesus is our authority and I want to say to you again, because he got the first prediction right, we can be confident that he will get the second. He put the telescope out a little way and said what would happen and then he puts the telescope right out and tells us what will ultimately happen.

[21 : 33] That's why in verse 24 he says, but in those final days, we're talking now about the end of the world, that is going to be cosmic. This is going to be planets changing and the Son of Man coming in great power so that the whole world sees him.

The same Jesus will come so that the whole world sees him. A day which will be very wonderful for the believer and very terrible for the rejecter. And we read that verse 26, as he left in the clouds and ascended to the throne in the clouds, he's going to come in the clouds.

Now dear friends, we didn't see the fall of Jerusalem, but it did take place. We may not see the coming of Jesus, but it will take place. I would love to be in the generation that sees Jesus return. Somebody's got to be in that generation when Jesus returns. And it's going to be, in the words of Jesus, in the blink of an eye. And he says that for the believer, when you see him coming, lift up your hearts because your redemption is drawing near.

That will be a most wonderful moment. The person who loves you more than anyone in the universe, he's going to be coming to collect you. So, we didn't see the fall of Jerusalem.

[22 : 58] We may not see the second coming, but we live between the two. And what we're meant to do is recognizing that he keeps his promises.

We're to live as if he keeps his promises. That brings us to the third thing this evening, which is Jesus, our priority. And now, these are the verses really which were read for us at the, just a few moments ago, just look at chapter 13, verse 28.

He's going back at this stage to the disciples who are around him and he's telling them that the signs of the fall of Jerusalem are going to be like the signs of summer.

So, he says, verse 28, you know what it's like when summer comes. The trees get twigs and leaves and you know what it's like in Scotland when the summer arrives.

The days get very long, certain fruits appear, your temperature rockets up to about 18 and white flesh appears.

[24 : 09] And in Sydney, there's the sound of mowers mowing lawns every second day because our grass grows so fast. So, we know when summer appears. And Jesus says, I want you to understand that just as you can tell when summer is coming, you'll be able to see the signs of the fall of the city.

And that's why he says, verse 29, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near right at the door.

You've asked me, verse 4, about these things. Well, I'm telling you now, verse 29, this is what these things will look like. And then he says, truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened.

Now, stay with me for just a minute. Some people think that Jesus obviously made a mistake here. They say, here's Jesus, he's predicting his second coming, he says it's going to happen in this generation, it didn't happen in the generation, he obviously got it wrong, poor Jesus.

But he's very clearly saying these things, they've mentioned these things, verse 4, he's now mentioning these things, verse 29, and these things to do with the temple did take place in that

generation.

[25 : 30] That's why he can go on to say, my words will never pass away. Even if heaven and earth pass away, my words will never pass away. This is the wonderful thing about Jesus, he's so good on his predictions.

You know, he says to the man who comes with a sick servant, when you go home, you'll find the servant well. And the man goes home and the servant is well. And then he says to the apostles, let's go next door to Bethany and we'll raise Lazarus.

And he goes next door and he raises Lazarus. And then he says to the disciples, it's time to go into Jerusalem, I need a donkey, go round to the next village, you'll see a donkey tied to a fence, untied, the man will say this, you say this, bring the donkey to me and I'll ride it in.

And he gets the donkey and rides it in. And he says, it's time for the last supper, so follow a man carrying a water jar and you'll see him go up to a room and as you follow him up, we'll have the supper up there and that's exactly what happens.

And he says to Judas, you'll betray me. And he says to Peter, you'll deny me. And Peter says, I won't deny you. And Jesus says, you will deny me. And he did deny him.

[26 : 34] And he says, I'll be arrested. And he was. And I'll be crucified. And he was. And I'll be raised. And he was. And the Spirit will come and he did. And Jerusalem will fall and it did.

And there'll be trouble and there was. And the gospel will go out and it has. This wonderful record of prediction. That's why we trust him.

And that's why we stand on the promises. Well, no wonder he says, verse 31, that heaven and earth may pass away, but his words will not pass away. You can trust his promises.

But about that day, verse 32, I have no date for you. About that day, the day of the return, the day of the coming of the Son of Man, I have no date for you.

Isn't this shocking? He says, no angel knows the date. I don't know the date. And I can say to you this evening, no preacher knows the date. No paperback, no news bulletin will give you the date.

[27 : 33] No cult leader knows the date. No dream that you have will give you the date. Only the Father knows the date. And this promise has done the church good. Because for 2,000 years, we've not known the date.

And that's been good for us. Because we have had to go on expecting, with good reason, and waiting, and praying, and sacrificing, and serving, and going, because we know that he keeps his promises.

And for 2,000 years, right around the world, this promise of a coming without a specific date has done the church good, and it's done the world good as well.

Now, what does Jesus want you and me to do while we wait? This is verses 32 to 37. And the answer is, he wants you and me to have him as your priority. He's our security.

Forget the temple. He's the real temple. He's our authority. He keeps his promises. Trust the promises. And he's our priority. He says in verses 32 to 37, I have two words for you that basically begin with W.

[28 : 44] One of them is watch, and one of them is work. Watch means that you get up in the morning, and you say to yourself, if you're wise, I don't live in a playground.

I live in a battleground. Oh, dear God, I'm capable of the devil deceiving me, the world enticing me, my sin corrupting me, any second of any hour.

It's a battle. Help me to be watchful, to keep trusting you, to walk closely with you, and not to be knocked over. And we also work, because he's given to each of us a task, and you've got a different task from me, and I've got a different task from you.

We're not to wake up in the morning and say, I am an independent agent. My life is mine. My life is my business. That's the way a pagan would talk.

We wake up in the morning and say, Jesus Christ made me. Jesus Christ saved me. Jesus Christ owns me. Jesus Christ uses me.

[29 : 58] One day, Jesus Christ will assess me. And so I want to have a useful day. We had a man in our church, a very lovely man. He told me that every morning, he'd wake up, swing his legs over the bed, and he would say, Heavenly Father, what's on today?

I would like to be involved. That was his morning prayer. I have a similar prayer in the morning, which I try to remember to say, and it goes like this. Heavenly Father, this is a day of new mercies, new opportunities, new responsibilities, and new battles.

And I'm praying that you'll overrule all things for your glory and for my godliness. Amen. But that's what it means to watch. We're going into a battleground.

And we're also to work. We don't just say, we'll do what we want. We ask if we might do what he wants. And please don't think of yourself as useless, as some people do.

Often the church has people in it who feel pretty useless. It's impossible to be useless in the Lord's service. If he's saved you, and he owns you, and he loves you, then you cannot be useless.

[31 : 07] You don't have to be muscly to be useful. You don't have to be a genius to be useful. You have to be willing. And we have a lady in our church who's a quadriplegic, and I would say she's one of the most useful people in our church.

Her life, her witness, her patience, her cheerfulness, is worth a thousand sermons. She's a tremendously useful person, even with her challenges.

Please don't forget that watch and work was something that Jesus did first. He watched right to the end. That's why we can be saved. And he worked right to the cross.

That's why we can be saved. Our security is because he watched and worked. But our usefulness has got to do with watching and working ourselves.

So don't take your lead from television, because the ads on television are profoundly selfish. Don't live your life during the week in a confused way so that people who are not Christians look at you and wonder whether you could really be a Christian.

[32 : 20] And don't take a place in the church where you just occupy a seat and not a task. You know, if you've got a place in the church, you've got a task in the church.

I've not been asked to say this. I'm just talking as a pastor. There's so many spectators in my church. But we need players who come and say, I've got a task.

I'm going to be a welcomer. I'm going to be kind. I'm going to serve. I'm going to look after people. I'm going to encourage people. And as you tip out those two drops of your frailty, you find the Lord fills up your cup.

So do wake up each morning ready to watch and ready to work. And Jesus tells us in Mark 13 that in all the troubles and all the opposition, the gospel is going to go out.

And we read in chapter 13, verse 27, that the saints are going to come in. He's going to gather his elect from the four corners of the earth. Nothing will stop the plan.

[33 : 25] So he's our security. If you belong to him, you have security. He's our authority. If you trust him, you've got great foundation. And he's our priority because as you live tomorrow and as I live tomorrow, we have an opportunity to be his servants in his world for his glory.

And I want to just finish by reading you a very short letter that I received a week ago from a lady. Most of the letters that get sent to me are crabby and grumpy. So feel free to write to me a lovely, sweet letter.

But this letter came from a lady and she said this. She said, this is a long overdue letter. The most difficult child in my family came to your church and would not talk to anyone.

I spoke to you after the service and you took his details and you contacted him and you took him out to coffee and you befriended him and you gave him a book and this changed his life.

I tell you this because I don't remember this at all. And I am incapable of doing good to anybody. She says, he's moved to Bondi, which is a very attractive suburb in Sydney and he has joined a church and been baptized.

[34 : 42] He has married a Christian girl and he's raising a godly family. We are encouraged. Thank you. That's what you do, dear friends.

You go out as his servants and you bump into somebody and you pray for them and you maybe have coffee with them and you try to tell them about Jesus and you give them a book and then you walk away from the whole experience wondering whether any good will come from it and down the track you discover that many, many things that you have done in the name of the Lord Jesus have been used by him for great and lasting good and I want to encourage you to keep at it.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our gracious God, we thank you for this wonderful chapter. We thank you for the way the Lord Jesus so beautifully and perfectly spoke to the disciples.

We thank you for all the things that he said that were important and we especially thank you together that he is our security, that belonging to him means that the past, the present and the future is wonderfully taken care of.

We thank you that he is our authority and we pray that you would give us grace not to doubt but to trust the promises and to walk in the path of your word and we thank you too that he is our priority and we ask that you would help us in this world as servants saved by grace to be useful for your glory and we ask it in Jesus' name.

[36 : 15] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.