

The Beginning of Birth Pains, Part 1

Luke 21:8

March 10, 2024

Well, we come back to our study in the Olivet Discourse. If you would open your Bibles to Luke 21, we'll get right to it. I warned you last week that we would be doing some work. I'm going to follow through on that promise today. We are going to start with a bit of an introduction. It'll be a longer introduction, so don't be looking to jot down an outline point right away. But I'm going to start with an introduction, remind you of a few important points, and then we're going to get into looking at the warning, starting with the warning against false messiahs.

Let's start just by reading Luke 21 in just that first section, 5 through 7, which we have been over a few times, so this ought to be familiar territory to you. I just thought I'd warm you up with something very familiar to make you feel comfortable. Luke 21:5, "While some were talking about the temple, that it had been adorned with beautiful stones and

dedicated gifts, he said 'As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.' And so they questioned him saying, 'Teacher, when, therefore, will these things happen and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?'"

We've spent enough time, I think, talking about the mistaken eschatology, or eschatological views, of the disciples. So I'm not going to rehash everything that we've covered. But I do want to stop here and note this. What is it that prompted their questions? Questions, plural, about the future. They had a couple questions here. What prompted these questions about the future? When Jesus prophesied, as he did in verse 6, the temple's total destruction, we see there that he predicted one thing, didn't he? One thing. The temple's destruction.

He was very clear about that. He was unambiguous, he was thorough. But he's talked about one thing. But we notice when they ask him questions, they ask him questions about multiple

things. Why do they ask Jesus about these things, plural, when he prophesied about one thing, namely the temple's destruction?

We also notice in Jesus' answer he was tracking with them because when he answered their questions he told them about signs of the end and the coming of the Son of Man. We see multiple things talked about in the next number of verses throughout the discourse. The prophecy that he gives, as we've mentioned, spans centuries from the destruction of Jerusalem through the times of the Gentiles verse 24, that which is the times of the Second Coming.

We find the same in the parallel accounts in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. That he's, his answer was very thorough, talking about a number of different things. In fact, when we look at the parallels in Matthew's account in particular, we realize that these things, that's the language the disciples used, plural. These things that the disciples asked about were things that pertain to the future, the sign of the end time, questions about eschatology. And it's important to note that up to this point in the accounts, as they think about eschatology and as they think

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about end times, they're also talking and combining that with the Second Coming, which assumes if Jesus is coming again, it means that well, he's with us now that means, well, he must be departing.

We have to realize that up to this point in the gospel counts, the disciples had not fully realized Jesus would be leaving them at all. They could barely foresee his death, let alone his resurrection, let alone his ascension into heaven forty days later. They didn't understand all this. It's in the upper room discourse, actually. And John recorded in John 13 through 16. That's where Jesus is explicit about his departure. He's leaving them, and that hasn't happened yet. It's not until the next night, Thursday evening, which is for us the middle of chapter 22 in Luke.

That's when Jesus and his disciples will share the last Passover in the upper Room. This occasion is Wednesday night. It's gonna be twenty four hours later, Thursday night, that they're actually talking about his departure. And it's at that meal that Jesus tells them, John, 13:33, "Little children, I'm

with you a little while longer. You shall seek me. But as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also where I'm going, you cannot come.' Peter asked him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered 'where I go, you cannot follow me now.'"

It's just a little later that he says in John 14, the great Rapture Passage, where he says I'm going away to prepare a place for you. So he tells him where he's going, what he's doing. He says, "I will come again." But it's on that final night and again from this place in our study. It's basically twenty-four hours from now. It's on that final night that it starts to dawn on the disciples, "Wait a minute, Jesus is going somewhere?"

This isn't the first time the subject of his departure had come up in the gospel accounts. We actually noted this that three disciples, and this has come up in our study in Luke 9. I guess that's a little while ago now, so I understand if you either don't remember number one or number two, you've come to our church since I've been in Luke 9. You know like I'm that was many, many moons ago, right?

But in Luke 9:3 disciples, the inner circle Peter, James and John, they were there when Jesus discussed the subject of his departure, His leading them on the Mount of Transfiguration. Luke 9:31. You may remember on the Mount of Transfiguration he was discussing his departure. Literally the word there is the word exodus. He's talking about his exodus, his departure, quote, "which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."

Who he's talking about that with? Moses and Elijah. Were standing there in glory with the Lord Christ. They're talking about his departure. Peter, James and John, they heard them talking about that. Probably very hard for them at that point. I understand this, probably very hard to comprehend. What they had, they were hearing, and even after that they were told not to talk about the things that happened up on the mountain. So out of sight, out of mind, they let that go. But now sitting with the Lord yet again on yet another mountain, well, it's coming to mind again.

In fact, Mark tells us that it was these same three disciples, Peter, James and John, along with Peter's brother

Andrew, who came and 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 then in Matthew 24:3, "tell us when will these things be? What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age." So they get it now. They get it now. He's leaving.

By the way, in Matthew 24:3, "What will be the sign [singular] of your coming and of the end of the age." Two things that are captured in that sense of the sign. Not going to go into great detail, but those concepts your coming, the end of the age. They are closely linked by the syntax there. It's actually inescapable. Matthew is intentional to join these things together in the, what the disciples ask. He joins these two events, you're coming, the end of the age. Joining these two events together with the, what's called a Granville sharp construction, in the Greek. It unifies these two events. They're not identical, but they are unified in the language there. The Second Coming, the end of the age, are unified, joined together, at least in the questions that the disciples ask.

And Jesus, when he responds, he responds in exactly the same way as if those two events are joined together. So, again what prompted the disciples here to ask about Christ coming again and the end of the age? First regarding the Second Coming, regarding his coming again, look over at Matthew's account. Just flip over very briefly to Matthew 23 and verse 37, end of chapter 23.

Matthew 23 obviously is the famous condemnation of the religious leaders, of the Jews. All the woes upon the scribes and the Pharisees for being hypocrites. It's all the reason that this temple is, is basically coming under the censure of God and under his judgment. But in Matthew 23:37, right before the Olivet Discourse is delivered, Jesus left no doubt then that he was leaving. He says this, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I, I wanted to gather your children together. The way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you were not willing."

That language by the way of gathering your children together. When he speaks to "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills

the prophets, stones those who are sent to her." He's speaking there again, once again, to the leadership. He says, "you leaders, I wanted to gather your children, the children of your ministry, wanted to gather them together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you were not willing. You leaders were not willing."

That's part of Matthew's intent in his Gospel is to demonstrate to the Jewish people, it's almost to, evangelistic in his Gospel to the Jews. He's really got a burden to show the Jews what went wrong. Why it is that their nation condemned the Messiah. You had bad leadership that you followed. Your leaders weren't righteous. They led you astray.

So repent, O Israel. God will be gracious. Repent, O Israel, Jesus says "I wanted to gather your children, but you leaders, you weren't willing." And so behold, verse 38, "behold your house [oh, it's not the Lord's house anymore. This temple is not the Lord's house. It's your house.] your house is being left to you." You can have it, but it's going to be desolate. "For I say to you [verse 39] from now on you shall not see me."

Again, indication of his departure. For under "I say to you, from now on you shall not see me until you say, 'blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Number of second person pronouns used in that section. Your children, you were unwilling, your house left to you desolate. The destruction of the temple is coming upon this generation of leaders, this generation of people, those who rejected their Messiah. And the desolation of the temple really means that the whole city is going to be conquered. As we see in Luke's record of the Olivet Discourse verses 20 to 24, the whole city is going to be conquered. The whole city is going to be destroyed.

And they will, these leaders will endure it. The people will endure this destruction, this desolation. They'll endure it without the benefit of the presence of their Messiah. They're out from under his protection. They don't have his power, his strength. Psalm 45, the girding on of his mighty sword. He's not going to pull that sword for them because they have said you're not our Messiah and therefore he says to them, you are not my people. That is a frightening thing for God to disown you and to leave you to your enemies.

So the destruction of the temple comes upon this generation. They're gonna endure it, this vengeance that's coming upon them, and they're gonna be there without the presence of their Messiah. They're gonna be out from underneath his protection. And then we see this in verse 39, thinking about the second person pronoun, second person address. In verse 39, the same, in the same verse. Notice how the second person pronouns apply to those who represent unbelieving Israel. That is the current generation. But it also applies to those who represent a future generation of believing Israel.

Notice: "I say to you, you who are standing here, you who are unbelievers. I say to you, from now on you shall not see me." Who's that? Unbelieving Jews. "You shall not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Who's the you who say something like that? A regenerate people, second person pronouns, second person address spoken to the same people.

In other words, Jesus says, "I'm the anointed one. I'm God's chosen Messiah. I'm sent to you, sent for your salvation. But since you have rejected me, I am leaving you. And since there is salvation in no one else, I will be back. But not until you repent". And we're still waiting for that to happen, aren't we? Still waiting. Now it's dawning though on the disciples. Hey, I think the Lord is leaving. He said he'll come back. But when? When's he coming back? What's going to be the sign of his return?

So we've talked about first his return, but second, think about the end of the age. What about the end of the age? Why are they asking about that? How did the disciples make that connection, by the way, between the Lord's return and then joining it to the end or the end of the age?

Part of the answer is the Jewish eschatology, as always, connected the coming of the Messiah with the end of the age. That's exactly what the disciples were struggling to understand, why they thought the temple would remain, and they were shocked when he said it's going to be destroyed. They thought, well,

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we're just, you're here, we're here, let's get the program underway. And he says, oops, stop, not so fast.

Jewish eschatology has always connected the coming of the Messiah with the end of the age, the restoration promises, it's all underway. It's all gonna happen. Even after the resurrection, by the way, just before they, he spent, they spent forty days with the resurrected Christ and just before Jesus ascends into heaven. Luke writes this in Acts 1:6. When they had come together, they were asking him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time you're gonna restore the Kingdom to Israel?"

They're still thinking it. They're thinking, okay, you said you were gonna leave. Your death was basically a departure. I mean, we were without you for three days and three nights in the grave. Now you're back, though. Great time to set up the Kingdom.

Two verses later, Acts 1:9, he shows him what he really meant by his departure from Jerusalem, what he was discussing with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. Acts 1:9,

he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight. Wrong again. Wrong again.

We can excuse their error at this point. We understand. It's so easy to get the future wrong. Why? Because we are people, creatures of the present. We're finite. We don't predict the future. We don't see the future. We rely on things like the Olivet Discourse to tell us the future. But even as he, Jesus, tells us about the future, you know how many views of the Olivet Discourse I have read that contradict one another?

Almost, I, I could probably say, probably without fear of any contradiction. If I take any two of you in this room and bring you up here and start asking the two of you to share your views about what's going to happen in the future, you will differ on one or many points. Why? Because we can't see the future.

Because the future and predictive prophecy only looks clear to us after it's happened. And then when we see the coming of the Messiah and we see that it's not just one coming but it's

two comings. There's a first advent when he comes in with salvation, offering salvation. And there's a second coming when he comes in judgement. We look at that now and say, of course, hey, if we were there, we would have gotten that. Hello.

Why didn't they get the suffering of the Messiah? Why didn't we, why didn't they understand that? Why didn't they see Isaiah 53 like we do? Well, because they didn't live, now, with a finished, completed canon. We can read it for ourselves and see the whole story. But you know what? There's something predicted about the end. It's like, let's just be humble about what's written here, knowing that it's going to be on that end, not this end, that end that everything lines up. But we're going to say, okay, disciples aren't wrong.

I mean they are wrong. They're in error. We don't condemn them for thinking the way that they were thinking that when Jesus, when they came to him in Acts 16 said, are you going to, is it now we we're ready. I, I, I got, I got, you know, Presidential Seals or Messiah Seals ready to emboss your

letters. Got an army. Got a bunch of guys ready. They're wrestling at that time with what they, they knew at the time.

And in fact, just to kind of defend them a little bit, there was biblical justification for them connecting the return of Christ with the end of the age. And they're not wrong about that. It's just they're wrong about that, they were wrong about the timing. But to see that, just turn a few pages back in your Bibles to the prophecy of Zechariah. You think, oh, that's Old Testament. Yeah, but it's just a couple of books before. This is just right before Malachi. We've got Matthew. You're already in Matthew. Just going in to Malachi. Easy journey.

Zechariah is a recent prophet, historically speaking, for the Jews. He's a post exilic prophet came to encourage the Exiles who returned back to the land in their building of the temple. The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem came to encourage them in the work. And in Zechariah, I mean, we can't know for sure what the disciples were thinking at this moment.

But these disciples, we do understand that they were students of the Law and the prophets. They were students of the Scripture and, and we could see that even from before they met Jesus, they were students of the Scripture. We see that attested to in ways in John, one and other passages of Scripture. And you can imagine them walking with Jesus for three years. They became very educated in the passages of the Old Testament as Jesus taught them along the way.

We can imagine that after Jesus had predicted the desolation, having spoken of his departure, which implied the need for him to return so that the rest of God's Restoration promises could be fulfilled, their minds are scrolling through the Old Testament. They're trying to think through. How will our nation ever receive the Messiah that it rejected? How is this going to come together?

I mean, we've seen and we saw it in Luke chapter 20, group after group of leadership and all the people follow the leadership. And group after group of their leadership came to confront Jesus about his use of authority. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

All of them showing their true colors, showing their lack of biblical understanding, showing they are totally corrupt, condemned. They have no place there. And so they're wondering to themselves, how is our nation ever going to receive the Messiah that it rejected? The only way that's gonna happen if is if God is gracious, and He's gracious by sending the Spirit, has to be by God's Spirit, if it's gonna happen at all.

So perhaps they landed in the final chapters of Zechariah's prophecy, which is all about this. Chapters 12 to 14, all about Israel's repentance, all about the gathering of the nations against Jerusalem. Zechariah 12:3 all about the rescue of Jerusalem from the nations of the world in verse 6. But that's due to the repentance of Israel. It's due to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Israel's, verse 10 says, "and I will pour out on the House of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on me whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, it will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a first born."

So that is when Israel will finally say, "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." That's when it's going to happen. It'll happen when the nation is spiritually regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and then and only then will that produce the gift and the fruits of repentance. Skip to the final chapter, Zechariah, chapter 14, and take a look at chapter 14, verse one, which brings some of these concepts that they're struggling with, the end, the Second Coming, brings it together.

"Behold, a day is coming for Yahweh when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. Indeed, I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. The city will be captured, the house is plundered, the women ravished, and the half of the city will go forth in exile. But those left of the [of the] people will not be cut off from the city. And then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations as the day when he fights on a day of battle.

"And in that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east. And the mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to West by

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a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel.

“Indeed, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, King of Judah, and Yahweh, my God will come, and all the holy ones with him, and it will be in that day that there will be no light. The luminaries will dwindle. It will be a unique day, which is known to Yahweh neither day nor night, but will be that at evening time there will be light. It will be in that day that the living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea, the other half toward the western sea.

“It will be in summer as well as in winter, and Yahweh will be king over all the earth. In that day, Yahweh will be the only one and his name one. All the land will be changed into a plain from Gaba to Ramon, south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem will rise and inhabit its sight, from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel

to the King's winepresses. And the people will inhabit it. And there will no longer be anything devoted to destruction, for Jerusalem will be inhabited in security."

Again, I mean, that's a marvelous prophecy. Maybe one day, if I ever get back to the Old Testament, I'll preach through Zechariah. What a fantastic word. I mean the ground that that covers it's is much as the Olivet Discourse covers and even further than the Olivet Discourse covers.

But we can't be certain what was on the, the minds of the apostles and the disciples, whether or not that passage was on the disciples minds to inform their question. But this we do know. That is a prophecy in Zechariah 14 that awaits fulfillment. And that is a prophecy that joins Jerusalem's destruction to the return of Yahweh to come and rescue his people. Part of it has been fulfilled, hasn't it? A.D. 70. He says I will gather the nations against Jerusalem to battle. The city will be captured, houses plundered, women ravished. Half of the city go forth in exile. That's happened in A.D. 70.

But there's another part of this. Those left of the people will not be cut off from the city, and Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations. That has not happened. So much more of this has not happened. It's a prophecy that joins Jerusalem's destruction to the return of Yahweh to come to rescue his people. So whatever the case, Peter, James, John, Andrew, they come to Jesus privately. They ask him about all this. Tell us, when will these things be? What's going to be the sign, the sign of your coming end of the end of the age?

Okay, with this in mind, now go back to Luke 21. Let's see how Jesus answers the disciples' questions about the future and as to when these things will be and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place. He starts the answer in verse 8, "And he said see to it that you are not deceived for many will come in my name saying 'I am he' and 'the time is at hand,' do not go after them."

So he's saying they're going to try to answer those two questions, but the sign of your coming and the sign of the end of the age. Well, the sign of my come, I'm here, I've come. The

time is at hand, The end of the age is here. "Do not be deceived. Many will come in my name, saying exactly that I am he, And the time is in hand. Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first. But the end does not follow immediately."

Then he continued saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." Notice how the Lord's mind has jumped immediately in his answer to the far future. But then in verse 12 his mind backs up, "but before all these things."

Before all these things, what's gonna happen? Persecution. Imprisonment. Testifying to the truth. Before kings and governors. So he tells his disciples, stay faithful, endure. Some hard times may be coming for you. But listen, I've got you. I've planned this. It's for your testimony. It's for salvation. Stick to the plan.

Then in verses 20 to 24 he comes around again to telling them about the destruction of Jerusalem to fulfill vengeance on the Jews and on its leadership, as he predicted. Verse 24 says "Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the gentiles [then this] until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled." So for a time, the Jews will not be in total control and in full charge of Jerusalem. And in that verse, verse 24, Jesus is implying the passing of time between the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as he's been talking about, and then the fulfillment of the times of the gentiles. And guess what? We're still waiting. In verse 24, it encompasses so far two thousand years, still waiting.

Come to verse 25 and notice that Jesus picks up where he left off. The word signs, in verse 11, "there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." That word *semeion*, it's the link to verse 25 terrors great signs from heaven. And then look at verse 25. "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth, anguish among nations in perplexity, at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world. For

the powers of the heavens will be shaken then [not you will see, notice] they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near." Fantastic prophecy.

Couple things to notice. First, notice how Jesus uses the second person address in verse 28. Remember I mentioned this with Matthew 23? Second person address. It changed mid sentence. First he's talking to the unbelieving leaders, and then he talks about using the second person address you. It's not until you say blessed he comes in the name of the Lord he changes the address. He's talking to them, addressing them, but they're standing in the place of leadership, representing a future leadership, a one that is believing here.

Notice he uses the second person address in verse 28. When these things begin to take place, you straighten up. You lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near. He's speaking to his disciples here, isn't he? He's answering the questions that they asked. He's addressing them in the second

person as if they themselves are present when he comes, look "in a cloud with power and great glory to redeem Israel."

How did Jesus go up? Acts 1:9, in a cloud. How will he return? Second Coming, in a cloud with power and great glory. And what will he return to do? Vengeance upon Israel? No, that happened in A.D. 70. Here, it's to redeem Israel.

Now these disciples, these particular disciples, believing disciples, they will be there. Yes, they'll be there in the sense that they're gonna return with Christ on that day. Zechariah 14:5 talks about Yahweh returning with His holy ones. That's them. And by the way, beloved, that's us too.

The Church. We'll return at the Second Coming, having been raptured seven years earlier. We're going to return with Christ. These believing disciples are going to be there in the sense they're going to return with Christ on that day. Revelation 19:14 says they'll come with the armies of heaven clothed with fine linen, following him on white horses going into battle. Are they going to fight? Are they going to get their fine, fine

linen, white and pure, dirty? Not at all. He does all the fighting for us.

But these disciples, they're not themselves going to be the ones standing on the ground lifting up their heads because their redemption is drawing near. That's a future generation of believers standing on the earth at that time when Jesus uses the second person. Throughout this discourse, it's really important, important as a matter of interpretation to see which you refers to these particular men and which you addresses them as representatives of believing Israel. The "yous," second person plural address in verse 28, clearly refer to a future believing generation of Israel of whom these disciples are a part, in whom they will join on that day. That's the first thing to notice.

Second thing to notice in verses 25 to 28, it's about a future period of tribulation that's coming upon the world. Massive tribulation culminating in the return of Christ with power and great glory. Power and great glory. Glory is the idea of manifesting all of his attributes and such a when, when I say the word manifest, think I can see it, I can see it. This is not

an invisible return of Christ referred to here. This is visible, manifest. He's coming in the cloud with power and great glory.

This, verses 25 to 28, continues the, the concept of this worldwide tribulation that Jesus started talking about back in verses 8 through 11. So you need to see that both sections, verses 8 through 11 and verses 25 to 28, both of those sections refer to the tribulation that's coming upon the world. We have called it the Great Tribulation, in this seven-year period. There's a two halves. I'm not going to go into all of that tribulation doctrine right now, but let's just put this chapter in its chronological order.

I'm talking about historical timeline, chronological order. First in the order in this chapter is verses 12 to 24. They're first on the timeline and some of these men are going to witness this. They're gonna live through verses 12 through 19. They're gonna see, some of them are gonna see the destruction of Jerusalem. That happens as verses 20 to 24.

Next on the timeline, verses 8 through 11. This is the first half of the great tribulation. Verses 8 through 11, Matthew 24:8, Mark 13:8, both of those texts, in both those texts, Jesus calls that section this group of, of events, the beginning of birth pains. The beginning of birth pains. It's the start of labor, in other words.

I've heard some refer to it as Braxton Hicks contractions, but that's not true. But Braxton Hicks are, correct me if I'm wrong, ladies, I've never done this. But Braxton Hicks are false labor, right? False labor, not true labor. This is not Braxton Hicks, this is true labor. The beginning of the birth pains. So that's next. Verses 12 to 24 come first, verses 8 through 11 come next. That's the first half of the tribulation. And then finally, verses 25 to 28, the second half of the tribulation that ends at the second coming. Just three parts there. Easy to remember right?

Now, all of that was my introduction, okay. So don't judge my time until I get into my outline, okay? But all that's introduction just to help you to get the context, to remind you

of a few key points and then set the timeline of Jesus' discourse, here. Let me make something clear to you as we get into verses 8 through 11, and it's especially for those of you who may be prone to wonder if this or that is a sign of the end.

Where is this person or that person might just be the Antichrist, we're seeing him revealed. For those of you who are checking the websites in the news and following online gurus who try to point out all the different signs that you're seeing in your headlines, listen. And I and I want you to hear me on this because I, I know that I've, I've said this to some people.

And they'll look at me and they'll smile and nod as if to kind of patronize the little pastor and then send me on my way and go right back to their website. And I just want to disabuse you of your worry. But you know what I've just found out in pastoral ministry over, over decades. Some people just love to worry. They just really like having anxiety and worrying about the end and all that kind of stuff. Can I just tell you, verse 8 through 11, it describes the first half of the great tribulation, the beginning of birth pains. We need to realize

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Jesus is speaking to his disciples. They're representatives of a future Israel, a regenerate people, believing people who will repent at some point and they will, will receive the protection of Christ at his return when he comes to judge the nations, to protect them, having been surrounded by the nations.

That means Christian, church member, members of the church age. That means none of what is happening in verses 8 through 11, none of what is happening in verses 25 to 28. None of that happens in the church age in which we now live. It's not going to happen to you. It may be similarities. I'm going to point those things out along the way, but there is nothing on the scale and the intensity of what is about to come upon the earth during the great tribulation, what Jesus calls the beginning of birth pains.

This will happen after the church has been raptured, when Christ returns to take his church home to be with him, as he tells his disciples in John 14:1 through 3, as he elaborates through Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 18, as he continues to elaborate in 1 Corinthians 15:51 to 54.

That's the rapture passages. That's the next event which is imminent on our time frame. We don't know when that's going to happen. In fact, I'll just say this kind of don't have time to get into it now, but we will later. But I believe that it is the rapture event. It's going to create the kind of social chaos that kicks off the tribulation, which makes sense that the first of the beginning of the birth pains are false messiahs who arrive to fill the spiritual vacuum on the earth and explain all the chaos.

What happens every time, every time there's a catastrophe, 9/11, COVID, whatever. We're putting every expert we can on TV, putting a microphone in front of them, putting them on camera and saying, tell us, how do I understand these things? There are going to be false messiahs galore, stepping up to the plate. And that is when the Antichrist is going to be revealed. He's going to be the false Messiah of all false messiahs. He's going to be the man with all the answers. He's going to be the intelligent one, the one that we're like, "Okay, yeah, what he said."

I should correct that. We're not going to be the ones who say, yeah, what he said, we're going to be gone. But everybody on the earth, I mean, once the church is raptured, no believers left on the earth, only unbelievers on the earth, and unbelievers are caught up in deception.

So what Jesus calls the beginning of birth pains. This is the first half of what's called the great tribulation. That means when Jesus speaks to these disciples as believing Jews. He's speaking to them as representatives of the believing nation, the spiritual root of regenerate Israel. Yes, Romans 11 says they've been cut off for a time, but they will be grafted back into their own vine.

Not yet. Not until they repent. Not until the Spirit of grace causes them to be regenerate so that they can repent and believe. I recognize not everyone understands the text the way I've said it. I understand that there are some premillennial teachers who tell you that verses 8 through 11 is all about what's going on right now. And it's kind of like this convulsion of the earth that's growing and growing and getting worse and

worse and everything's gonna, run for the hills. And I do not believe that's true. I believe that's an error, believe it's a mistake.

But as we get into verse 8, we find the controversy about eschatology begins right away, right here, with this first sign of the end times, which is the proliferation of false messiahs. And I'm gonna address some of the difference of opinion next week. But look at verse 8 again, he said, "See to it that you are not deceived, for many will come in my name saying I am he, and the time is at hand. Do not go after them."

So first pain in the beginning of birth pains the many who impersonate Christ. You know the tribulation has begun when you see a host of false messiahs. So any of you who are here now, anybody who's listening online, anybody who listens to this message recorded later, if a whole bunch of people are gone and you walk into the church one day and not, not hard to find seating, the first pain to come in the beginning of birth pains is a proliferation of false messiahs.

Notice I didn't say false teachers. I didn't say false prophets. I said false messiahs. There's a difference. Now let's ask some observation questions. Who, what, when, where, why and how? Who? What? When? Where? Why? And how? That's six points, and I've got just a few minutes. I'm not going to get through all six. Breathe a sigh of relief, but I will get through a couple.

First point. Who? Number one, who is Jesus warning and about whom? Who is Jesus warning and about whom? As I mentioned in our little introduction, Jesus is warning his disciples. But the disciples, twelve of them, being apostles, they're not only the foundation stones of the church, they're also representatives of believing and repentant Israel, which from a first century standpoint is a future Israel.

Any gen, and all, you know, along with the grafted in any gentiles who will join Israel and trusting the Messiah in that day. And we know that there will be gentiles joining with Israel during the tribulation, taking refuge under Yahweh. The warning for these future believers is this. "See to it that you're not

deceived [and then the end of the verse] don't go after them." Don't go after those who are trying to deceive you.

Jesus uses two verbs to emphasize not just not just not to be deceived, but the intentionality that's required in avoiding deception. He says "see to it." It's the verb *blepo*, which in this context, *blepo* can just mean to see visually, you know, to look around and see things. But in this context, it has the meaning of watch carefully, beware, take heed, watch closely. About what? Deception.

The verb deception is *planao*. We get our word planet from the verb *planao*, or *plane*, which is the word deception. To ancient observers of celestial bodies, they appeared to, those that appeared to wander through the night sky. Not fixed stars, but wandering bodies. Never on a fixed path, always training. Those were *plane*. Those were wandering. They were, they were planets.

That's what the, the, the, the nature of deception is to wander. Not fixed, not nailed down, but wandering, straying all

the time. And the deception that's in view here is one of identity and authority and representation. Watch out. See to it you're not deceived.

That is to say, those who are deceived are morally culpable if they are deceived. We don't give them a pass for being caught in deception. They are morally culpable for their deception. Because the truth is right here. Want a brief word of application? We're not living in the period described here. We're believers in the church age. We're not going to live during this period that's described here. But as Jesus and the apostles have warned us repeatedly in the New Testament, false teachers infiltrate the church all the time trying to deceive, trying to lead us astray all the time.

New Testament is replete with warnings against the deception of false teachers and false teaching. And this is a perennial problem ever since the New Testament. So many texts to mention. For the sake of time, I'm just going to cite one of them. 2 Peter 2:1, false prophets, he's pointing his people back to the Old Testament, saying, "False prophets arose among the

people.” Who are the people? The people of Israel. False prophets arose among them, mimicking Moses, “just as there will also be false teachers among you who secretly introduced destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.”

You can't resist the deceptions of false teachers, many of whom these days are lurking online. You can't contend for the faith once for all, delivered to the saints, Jude 3, if you are passive or ignorant or lazy or uninterested in biblical doctrine, you must watch out. You must have your eyes open, your ears open, your mind engaged at all times. Watch out. Beware. Take heed. You have to take an active role. Take initiative. Constantly be on the lookout against false teaching, false teachers, because it's a moral issue.

And he, let me just tell you why it's a moral issue. If you say, you know what, all this doctrine stuff is just too heady for me. I just, I come into church. I'm tired. I'm just going to kind of check out, you know maybe scroll through the sports course during sermon, whatever. I don't know. I don't know. I

don't know what you all do. I think you're looking at me. But my glasses are make you fuzzy.

So I, but listen. Listening is a moral issue. When you take the time to listen and pay attention, you know what you're saying about that voice. I'm not talking about my voice. I'm talking about Christ's voice. I'm talking about God's voice in Scripture. You know what you're saying about that voice? That voice is important, and that is the moral judgement that you ought to make about God's voice.

It is not something you put on the level with the evening news. It's not something you de-elevate in your mind, in your thinking, your priority. You have to be listeners because it is a moral issue to listen and listen well. So who is Jesus warning if he's not warning us and directly he is warning us indirectly. But who's he warning without looking further in the context, Jesus is warning believers and as we continue in the context we see he's warning future Israel.

But the clear implication is for all believers in any time to be watching out. Beware. Take heed that none of us is deceived, whether by false teachers in our time or false messiahs in that time. About whom is Jesus warning? He's warning believers about those who come in his name, saying "I'm he. The time is at hand, signs have been fulfilled, I'm the second coming. I'm Christ, and the time is at hand, the end of the ages upon us."

And notice that the number of those who come falsely claiming Christ's identity, the number of those who come speaking with divine authority, the number of those who come falsely representing the one that he represents, namely God. The number will not be few, but many, many. They'll be everywhere.

Number two, point number two, is the what. So we talked about the who. What is the second point, the last point for today. What are the many doing? Quite simply, the many come making messianic claims, saying I am he. They claim to fulfil the second coming at the end of the age, the time is at hand.

Mark's account says they will be exceedingly successful. Many come in my name saying I'm he and will mislead many. Matthew says the same thing. This is an insidiously evil claim. How are we so certain, by the way, that when it says I am he, that that refers to a messianic claim. If we look at the Greek text, the claim is a shocking. *Ego eimi, ego eimi*, sometimes pronounced that way literally. That's translated, anybody who does any apologetics and knows, talking to Jehovah's Witnesses, you always go to John 8:58 where Jesus said "before Abraham was [what] I am, *ego eimi*." It's literally translated "I am." That's what's written in the text. Sounds more like a bold faced claim to deity than mere, if I could put it that way, mere Messiahship.

So how are we so certain that to the subject and the verb *ego eimi*, I am, we should add the predicate nominative pronoun he in our translations. I am he. You're thinking, Yeah, that's exactly what I was wondering about the predicate nominative. Let me help you out.

When we compare the synoptic parallel on Matthew's account, Matthew 24:5 very simple. Jesus says, "Many will come in my name, saying I am [not just I am, but] I am the Christ." *Ho christos*, there, answered, and they will deceive many. So because of Matthew's account we see the nature of the claim that it is specifically Messianic.

Even though this is not an explicit claim to deity as in I am, *ego eimi*, it is an implicit claim to deity, right? I mean claiming to be the Christ, the Messiah of God, because the Christ is both Son of Man and Son of God, right? So there is a claim to deity. It's embedded in the claim of Messiahship.

As we consider this lying claim to Messianic identity, Messianic authority, prerogative, a claim to represent God, be his anointed one. I think, I think we need to, before we go any further, this is how we'll end, and we'll pick it up next week. But we need to refresh our memory about who the true Messiah is, what it is that makes Jesus the Christ, God's Messiah, and no one else.

Direct you to our church's confession. The Second London Baptist Confession, published back in 1689. And here's this language that we find so helpful, Section number one, I'll quote from a few of these sections. Section number one, of Christ the Mediator says this, "It pleased God in his eternal purpose to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both to be the mediator between God and man [get this] the Prophet, priest, and king, head and Savior of the Church, the heir of all things, and to judge, the judge of the world."

Cutting that off, and moving on to section number two, we read this. "The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very an eternal God. The brightness of the Father's glory of one substance and equal with him who made the world, who upholdeth and governeth all things he hath made, did when the fullness of time was come, did take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin, so that the two whole perfect distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Each person is the very

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God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.”

Just take a breath there, because we're breathless and we cannot comprehend that. We cannot comprehend the essence of God, which is a simple singular essence. How God is all of his attributes. It is his essence to exist. He is life itself. He is infinite and eternal. And then to think about that One, the Creator joining himself to creation, as it says here, without conversion, without composition, without any confusion. Join together in one person with flesh. Very God, very man. How does that happen?

It's a mystery added to mysteries and beloved for us who're believers. We get to spend the rest of eternity delving into the wonders of that mystery forever, to learn more and more. We're mutable. Good thing, we change. That means every day we change upward in further degrees of glory and understanding about the perfections of Christ.

Skipping down to section nine in our London Baptist Confession, very important section, the office of Mediator between God and man is proper only to Christ, only to the Messiah who is the prophet, priest, and King of the Church of God and may not be either in whole or in part thereof transferred from him to any other. And who comes at the end saying, "I am he?" How dare you? Who do you think you are?

The office of Mediator fulfilled by Christ is fulfilled by Christ alone. It is a non transferable office, particularly in view of the roles that Jesus performs for us as the Christ. I mean not all, not just to mention the fact that nobody can be what he is, but also in what he does for you and for me, beloved, no one can do that, only him. So Jesus warns his disciples as representatives of believing Israel that this role which is non transferable by nature. And yet, there will be many who try to assume the identity of Christ, and they will succeed in leading many astray.

False christs are going to take it upon themselves to stand in the prophetic office of Christ as revealers of divine truth,

teachers of the ignorant, capturing the masses and captivating with their lies, always deceived and being deceived. They will continue in that deception. They're going to be the, the interpreters of everything that's going on in the world. And you know what? Everybody's going to be listening to them in that day.

False christs will take it upon themselves to stand in the priestly office of Christ as those who have, they've got the audacity, they claim they have the power to reconcile sinners to God. They claim, setting aside the finished work of Christ. They claim to finish his work to assuage the guilt of guilty sinners. Cover the shame of guilty sinners. Take away the, the shame in their consciences. Make them feel better.

They're going to be standing as false priests to a guilty, vile, wretched people still saturated in sin. There will be no, without repentance, there will be no assuaging their guilt. False christs are going to take it upon themselves to stand in the kingly office of Christ as political and military figures exhibiting leadership. They're going to speak with charismatic

authority. They're going to act with un, seemingly unstoppable power. They're going to be signs that accompany them. They're going to persuade people to follow them into battle, to bow down before them as kings, monarchs.

Now we have several more questions coming. When, where, why, how. The impersonation of Christ is going to be happening. We're going to have to save those for next time. But let me close with this, the final section in chapter eight of Christ the Mediator, which is final section of section ten, The London Baptist Confession says this. "This number and order of offices is necessary." Necessary for you, beloved, for me, as believers. "For in respect of our ignorance we stand in need of His prophetic office, and in respect of our alienation from God and the imperfection, imperfection of the best of our services, we need his priestly office to reconcile us and to present us acceptable unto God.

"And in respect to our averseness and utter inability to return to God for our rescue and security from our spiritual adversaries, we need his kingly office to convince, subdue,

draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to his heavenly Kingdom.”
We need him. We need him as he is, and no false version, no counterfeit

The warnings from Jesus, who is himself the Christ, about this proliferation of false christs, false messiahs, at the end of the age, just prior to his coming. Though these warnings apply most directly to the believers alive at that time who were going to live through those days, beloved, as I'm saying, we, we too need to heed the warnings because they apply not directly, but they do apply indirectly to us.

One of the ways you can heed what Jesus said to his disciples. See to it that you be not deceived. One of the ways you could put this into practice in your life and your week. Just tell you it's not by studying every counterfeit doctrine that blows with the wind like so many dandelion seeds and chasing them all over the place, online or in person or wherever. No, it's by studying the truth.

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It's by seeing the real thing. It's by saturating your mind with, with the truth. It's by loving and savoring the privilege that you have as reconciled children of God of knowing the true Messiah personally. Get to know him, beloved. Get to know Him so that no one would ever fake you out.

First, in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of his prophetic office every single day. Don't we give thanks for the, his gift of the truth? Do not neglect the truth of his word that he gave you that he put into your hands in a Bible. Those who don't take advantage of the light that they have, the light that they think they have, will be taken away. Don't let that be you.

Jesus said as much to his own generation, privileged to be in the very presence of him, the Messiah. They were able to see Him and hear His teaching. Had the gift of his presence and teaching in front of him. How I wish I could be there for one just, just one sentence. I'd love to hear what it sounds like.

But Jesus said to those who spurned his teaching, thought little of it, turned away to other things Jesus said to them,

listen, in John 12, "For a little while longer the light's among you. Walk while you have the light, that the darkness may not overtake you. He who walks in the darkness doesn't know where he goes. While you have the light, believe the light in order that you may become sons of light. These things Jesus spoke, and then He departed and hid himself from them."

He illustrated what it would be like for him to be gone. Jesus the Messiah is the fulfillment of all prophecy. He's, he's the fulfillment of the Bible, beloved, and he is our Lord and our Truth Teacher. He sent the Spirit to be our indwelling truth teacher, to illuminate the truth for us, teach us, lead us.

He gave pastors teachers to the church to help you to know how to read your Bibles well. Go to him daily in His word and learn so that you might worship and obey him and you'll accept no substitutes. Second, in respect of our alienation from God and the imperfection of the best of our services.

The elders, by the way, in light of the imperfection of the best of our services, we pray every single Sunday before we come

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into here. We pray, Lord, make our holy, by your Spirit, make our worship acceptable in your sight. Because we know we're flawed. We know there's error in us, there's weakness in us. There's ways that we drift and stray and don't hit the right notes and the right tones. And we, we don't say everything perfectly, Lord, let our service together as a body be acceptable in your sight. Only you can do that, Lord, by your Spirit, your elders are praying that on your behalf every Sunday.

So in respect of our alienation from God and respect of the imperfection of the best of our services, we need as priestly office, don't we? We need him as our High Priest to reconcile us to God, to present us acceptable unto God, and no one else can do that for you. So beloved, you should be confessing your sins daily because why? Because you sin daily. You should be busy in the daily work of repentance, always mortifying your sin, being constant and ever diligent to put on righteousness. And we're encouraged in this because Jesus, our great High Priest, to whom we can confess, who, who prays for us, who intercedes for us with His Father. He is the one who is our full and perfect

atonement, died for us. Put his life on the line, and He himself is our righteousness.

He's our great High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses. He's been tested in every single way as we are yet without sin, and so he's the one who can help us out of our sin. He succeeded where we failed. He ever lives to bring us to God so we might live in gratitude about our reconciliation to God so we can enjoy communion with God. That's the privilege of every single believer, something that we get to indulge in and enjoy every single day communion with God.

Third, in respect to our utter inability to return to God for our rescue, for our security from spiritual adversaries, we need his kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to his heavenly Kingdom. No political savior, no "messiah," can accomplish what he has accomplished, let alone fulfill all their own empty promises they keep making to us year after year or every four years, or every two years, or whatever it is.

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None of them rules in righteousness. None of them tells the truth. None of them upholds justice as he does. All of them are purveyors of the art of compromise. He never compromised, not on one point never compromised. He upholds justice and righteousness. In view of Christ as King, all government rests upon his shoulders, the legislative, the judicial and the executive. He holds fast to the law of God, written and legislated. He adjudicates the law of God as the judge of all the earth. He will execute all justice as the King, the executive branch so that not one sin is ignored and let go.

If you've been the victim of anybody else's sin, and I'm talking terrible sins, some of them sexual sins, defiling sins that have filled you with shame all the years of your life, that is good news. That he is just. Talked to a woman the other day who denies the reality of hell. And I think if you deny the reality of hell, you deny the justice of God. What kind of a monster do you follow who will not do justice to make sure that every single sin, especially the vilest of sins, especially the sins that haven't gone punished?

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The ones that are hidden, the ones that have plagued your own conscience, the ones that have hurt you the most and hurt people you love and know every single sin gets its just reward because he is the executor of all justice. The justice of God is good news.

The fact that one, not one sin is ignored would be very bad news for every single one of us, wouldn't it? We're not for the ministries of his other two offices. As our great prophet, he's taught us the way of salvation, how to be rescued from our sins. As our great High Priest, he's accomplished our redemption by his sacrifice on the cross, by the offering of his perfect life and the covering of his perfect life.

And so now as our true king, all our future hopes, all of our dreams, and although we have no imagination to dream, because we're just so finite and so limited, but all goodness is to be fulfilled in him. He's our King who always convinces us. He's the one who always subdues our errant rebel impulses. He's the one who always draws us to him by the magnetism of his perfect life and wisdom and his Holiness. He's the one who

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upholds and delivers us from all of our enemies, and he is the one who is sure to bring us safely home, shepherding us into his eternal Kingdom of our God and his God, of our Father and his Father. Amen. Is he your King? Is he your prophet? Is he your priest? Is he your Messiah? Beloved, there is only one Christ accept no substitutes, no counterfeits. Let's pray.

We thank you, O God, and bless your holy name for your perfect plan of redemption that puts your wisdom on display, your power and your glory. We thank you for what the Lord Jesus is teaching us. He, exercising his prophetic office to instruct us about the future. We thank you for what, the future. How, how thinking about the future teaches us how we ought to live right now.

So we asked it as we just, we're just commencing this study. We're just getting into, just dipping our toes into the water really of, of what the what Jesus has said. We just ask that you continue to guide us. Direct us, Lord Jesus by your prophetic office. Deploy your Spirit. Clarify the truth for us because the truth is clear. It's just us that are dull in

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understanding. It's just us that are weak. Please help us.
Illuminate the truth to us and fill our hearts with joy and
longing for your return. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.