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Swift Creek Baptist Church (swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com)
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Mark 13:1-10 “Early Signs of the End”

Note: Much of the following content was eliminated from the final draft of preaching notes but is included in this document but those who desire to read the full text.

Intro. There seems to have always been on the part of mankind a keen interest in the future. Somehow men know that life will not always continue as we know it. Opinion polls have shown that most people believe in an end of the world in some sense of the word. People really get interested if they think that the end of the world could take place in *their* lifetime. Actually, the Bible does not talk so much about the end of the world, but the end of the *age*. When Jesus comes again, the world will not end, but this present sin-cursed evil age will come to an end. Satan will be bound and Jesus will reign. What a day that will be!

People try to satisfy their curiosity about the future in various ways. Some people turn to psychics and fortune tellers (cf. Dt. 13:3-5; 18:14; Jer. 27:9; Zec. 10:2). Others turn to their horrible [horo]scopes. So in the midst of all these satanic imitations, we must consider the question, “Is it possible for the people of God to know what the future holds?” Well, the God that we believe in is the God who “declares the end from the beginning” (Isa. 46:10). Though He has not committed Himself to declaring *everything* about the future, He has declared much of what will happen in the future. So I believe we should turn to the Bible to discover what the future holds for us and our world. In Mark chapter 13, the Lord Jesus tells us much of what will happen from His day until the time He will return to earth. Some of what He says here has already been fulfilled. The rest has yet to be fulfilled.

In 1 Thess. 5:4 Paul points out that believers are not in darkness like unbelievers, and he says that the Day of the Lord will not overtake *us* as a thief in the night. A thief does not announce his coming but catches people by surprise. So based on that verse we should not be surprised by end-time events. That is why Paul says in v.6 of that chapter that we should watch. Five times in this Olivet Discourse, Jesus called upon His disciples to watch (vv.5, 9, 23, 33, 37). But how do we watch? Look over at vv.28-29, “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!” The main way that we watch for the Second Coming of Christ is to watch for the *signs* of the Second Coming of Christ.

Do you know what signs point to the return of Jesus? I want you to know what signs or events are clearly saying, “Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming.” Jesus Himself tells us, as recorded in Mark 13, what events will lead up to His return to this world. I hope you will be able to look for these signs as they occur, understand what they can mean, and react properly.

It is significant that this teaching about the return of Christ took place right before the death of Christ. To understand who He really is, the disciples were called upon to look beyond Jesus’ death to His glorious return (v.26). The Son of Man had to suffer and die, but after that He would be vindicated and glorified.

Now let’s start off by considering:

I. PAST PROPHECIES FULFILLED

Why should we take a look at history from almost 2000 years ago? History has proven that Jesus was indeed correct concerning the prophecies that were fulfilled in the first century. Since Jesus was 100% accurate in *those* predictions, then we can have confidence that the other prophecies will indeed be fulfilled. Note with me the first prophecy that was fulfilled:

A. Jesus Predicted the Destruction of Israel as a Nation – This is implied in v.2 by His prediction of the destruction of the temple. The Romans would have to take Jerusalem by military warfare in order to destroy their temple. The destruction of Jerusalem is also implied by what He says beginning in v.14. Furthermore, there is a context to this chapter that you need to understand. The Lord has been in the temple and has been dealing with those who had rejected Him. As Jesus walked away from the temple that day, He stunned the disciples when He said to the people, “Your house is left to you desolate” (Mt. 23:38). Jesus was predicting the fall of Jerusalem, and then the destroyed city would desolate for a while.

That is exactly what happened. When the Jews rebelled against the Romans almost 40 years later (beginning in 66 A.D.), Jerusalem was taken by Titus, son of the emperor Vespasian (AD 69-79). It is believed that more than a million Jews perished. The rest were sold into slavery and/or scattered to the nations. As a political unit, Israel ceased to exist. Many Jews believed that God would send the Messiah and deliver them from the Roman army, but they had already rejected their Messiah, so they were not delivered.

Just because Jerusalem was conquered by the Romans does not mean that the temple would be destroyed. Often sacred temples would be spared out of fear of offending the gods represented. Yet notice another prediction that Jesus made:

B. He Also Predicted the Destruction of the Temple - Notice the background of this prediction. In v.1 we read, “Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!’” The Jews knew nothing more solid and seemingly permanent than the temple. Also, it was considered to be among the most spectacular wonders of the ancient Roman Empire. The disciples were impressed and shared their thoughts with Jesus. As they left, the disciples pointed out to the Lord the stones of the temple, including the huge stones that were used for the foundation and retaining walls of the temple. According to Josephus, some of the stones were thirty-seven feet long by twelve feet high by eighteen feet deep!¹ Some of these stones weighed a hundred tons! Imagine how they moved those stones in place in a day before heavy machinery! As a person looked at the temple from the Mount of Olives in the morning, he would see plates of gold and glistening white marble reflecting the rays of the sun.

In response, Jesus shakes them by what He says in v.2, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Imagine how shocked they were when Jesus informed them that the building they admired so much would one day be demolished.

There are a number of reasons God did not protect the temple but prophesied its destruction. One primary purpose of the temple was to carry out the sacrificial system required by the books of the law. However, Christ fulfilled that purpose when he died as a sacrifice for our sins. Furthermore, that temple failed in its missionary purpose to reach the nations with the truth of God,

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.11.3.

and to be a place of reconciliation with God. That task was now vested in His church. Of course, Israel's rejection of their Messiah also had a role in its destruction.

My friend, we could ask a similar question today. Don't you see all these beautiful buildings in our major cities? What do we really see? We see their beauty, strength, stability, and permanence. It looks to me as if they will be here for a long time. Yet who would have ever thought that the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York would have come crashing down with such total destruction? The fact is such buildings are only temporary. They are passing away. Paul said, "the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Are you living for things that are eternal, or only temporal?

Well, about 40 years later the temple was destroyed just as Jesus had predicted. The Jewish historian Josephus described what happened: "Now the fateful day had arrived... the very day on which previously [the temple] had been burned by the King of Babylon.... One of the soldiers... snatched a brand from the blazing timber and... flung the fiery missile through a golden window. While the sanctuary was burning... children and old people, laity and priests alike were massacred. The emperor ordered the entire city and sanctuary to be razed to the ground." Only after the fire had gutted the temple were the remaining walls pulled down, as Jesus predicted in v.2. The Romans dismantled every stone in the building to get to the gold that melted into the cracks during the fire.

Now notice what Jesus says in v.31, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." Jesus said that His Word would stand when all else in this world has passed away. He has already demonstrated that His Word is true. Not only did Jesus give this prophecy some 40 years before it happened, but this prophecy was recorded and distributed by Mark prior to the fulfillment of these words!² In fact, conservative Bible scholars believe that the gospel of Mark was written about 10 years before the fall of Jerusalem.³ So since these prophecies of Jesus were fulfilled, we should give heed regarding the prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled. You can trust your life and soul to the words of Jesus.

Next, let's consider:

II. PRESENT PROPHECIES THAT ARE BEING FULFILLED

Most of Mark 13 relates to prophecies that are being fulfilled or have yet to be fulfilled. So the question of the disciples in v.4 still applies, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" In the light of the immediately preceding context, the words, "When will these things be...?" would seem to refer only to the destruction of Jerusalem and temple. Nevertheless, a second look at the phraseology of "all these things" points to a broader, more comprehensive, meaning. The very form in which the question is cast seems to indicate that, in their minds, Jerusalem's fall, particularly the destruction of the temple, would mean the end of the age. In fact, Matthew 24:3 states their question more fully, "Tell us, when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Time would tell whether the destruction of Jerusalem would be followed by the return of Christ. We now know that was not the case.

Jesus then made it clear what signs would have to be fulfilled before the fall of Jerusalem and His return. Yet he also says in the last of v.7, "[such things] must happen, but the end [is] not yet." First, He warns of some dangers and troubles that the world, and even the disciples, would face, including:

² Liberal scholars date the book of Mark to 70 A.D. or later because they can't affirm the prophecy of Jesus!

³ Most believe that Mark was the first of the 4 gospels to be written.

A. Spiritual Deception – In v.6 Jesus warns, “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many.” In Matthew’s account they say, “I am the Christ,” i.e. the Messiah (24:5). The pages of history are filled with the tragic stories of false Messiahs and their enthusiastic but deluded disciples. Unfortunately, people are prone to deception, so Jesus warned His disciples not to be deceived by these impostors. About A.D. 132 Simon bar Kosiba [or Kokhba] evidently claimed to be the Messiah and led another Jewish revolt against Rome.⁴ Back in the 1970’s someone estimated that 1,100 false Messiahs had arisen in the previous 50 years who claimed to be a Messiah or Savior to the world. Most had risen in Africa, India, or the Orient.⁵ Furthermore, there is the false Jesus of the cults, but he is not the Jesus of the Bible. Indeed, the Bible warns of those who preach another Jesus, or shall we say a different Jesus.⁶ Many of us remember David Karesh and the Branch Davidians (1993). They were so deceived. Wikipedia lists a number of leaders who have claimed to be the Messiah or Jesus, including Australian Alan John Miller, born in 1963, who claims to be the reincarnation of Jesus of Nazareth.

As the end of time approaches, there will be more and more people who will step forward claiming to be the savior of the world. 2 Timothy 3:1 says, “in the last days there will come times of difficulty” (ESV). Difficult days are fertile ground for the rise of false Messiahs that offer hope. Beware that you are not deceived by their slick words and evil deception. 1 Timothy 4:1 says, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.”

Therefore, Jesus says in v.5, “Take heed that no one deceives you.” These messianic pretenders deceive people with their dramatic gestures and daring declarations. And don’t be deceived even by signs and wonders, as Jesus warns in v.22. They are no sure sign that a teacher is from God. So how can you avoid being deceived? You should look at the character of the teacher and the content of his message. We should compare what we see, hear, and experience by what Jesus and His apostles have said in the Word of God. If what we see, hear, or experience is not fully consistent with the Word of God, then we should reject it. This is why you and I need to be grounded in the Word of God. After all, back in chapter 12, v.24 Jesus said, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?”

Another sign that we are approaching the end times is:

B. International Disruption – In v.7 Jesus says, “But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen....” Then He says in v.8, “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom....” What is significant about this prediction is the fact that at the time He spoke those words, the Roman peace through military strength was widespread. But Christ said war would come; and it did. About 10 years later (40 A.D.) the Romans fought and won battles against Britain. In 61 A.D. Britain revolted against Roman rule resulting in another war. Meanwhile, Emperors Caligula, Claudius, and Nero threatened war against Israel before it finally came beginning with the Jewish rebellion in 66 A.D. Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D. Another war ensued against the Jewish people when the fortress of Masada fell in 73 A.D. There were other wars in the outlying regions of the Empire.

⁴ He ruled as the prince of a semi-independent state in Israel for three years.

⁵ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: #1512* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979).

⁶ 2 Cor. 11:4 says, “For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached....” Gal. 1:6 says, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.”

Wars have continued to this very day. Oh, politicians promise peace, but they can't deliver lasting peace. It has been supposed that modern social theory and political systems would bring peace. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, there was talk of bringing about world peace. Yet world war broke out by 1915, but then they claimed that WWI was supposed to be "the war to end all wars." But it didn't! War continued and intensified with WWII. At the close of that war, the United Nations was founded with the hope and promise of ending war between nations. Yet wars have continued in just about every continent. In fact, there have been about 300 wars fought since 1945!⁷ There are wars even as I speak in Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, Syria and elsewhere. In fact, the Geneva Academy website lists over 100 armed conflicts in the world *today*.⁸ Jesus was right!

I would also point out in v.8 that "nation" is actually *ethnos* in Greek, from which we get our English word ethnicity. Jesus could also be predicting conflict between ethnic groups. One glaring example is violent conflict against Jews both inside and outside of Israel. I'm afraid we are going to see more ethnic conflict in the United States. After years of improvement in ethnic conflict, the last five years ethnic conflict has escalated.

Today, there is more talk of peace. But don't be deceived by such talk. While seeking peace can be a noble act, lasting peace will not come until the Prince of Peace comes, Jesus Christ. Instead, I Thess. 5:3 says, "for when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them...."

I believe that war may intensify a few years before the coming Tribulation, and I do believe that the bitterness of war will lead the world to look for a solution, which will open the door to the antichrist to offer a solution.

Friend, until Jesus comes there will be no lasting peace in this world, but you can have lasting peace in your soul! Receive Jesus into your heart. As someone has said, "No Jesus. No peace. Know Jesus. Know peace."

Jesus also predicted:

C. Earthquakes – In the middle of v.8 Jesus said, "And there will be earthquakes in various places...." There have always been earthquakes from the time of recorded history. Vincent notes that between this prophecy by Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem, there were 4 *major* earthquakes (in Crete, A.D. 46 or 47, at Rome, A.D. 51, at Apamaia in Phrygia, A.D. 60, and at Campania, A.D. 63). However, to be prophetically significant, we may expect that they will increase in frequency and intensity as we approach the return of Christ, especially in light of the birth pangs analogy in the last of v.8. In fact, during the 19th century there were 9 major quakes, but in the 20th century there were over 45! More recently, we saw with our own eyes what an earthquake can do when a powerful quake occurred under the Pacific Ocean in December of 2004. That earthquake spawned a tsunami that killed over 225,000 people! The next most deadly earthquake in this century took place in Haiti, where at least 160,000 people died, and 1,000,000 were made homeless!⁹ A 2010 U.N.-sponsored report noted that more people died from earthquakes during the previous decade than from any other disaster. Experts say earthquakes will continue to threaten millions of peoples' lives because eight out of the 10 most-populous cities in

⁷ <https://www.infoplease.com/history/us/major-military-operations-since-world-war-ii>.

⁸ <https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts>.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Haiti_earthquake. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_21st-century_earthquakes.

the world are on earthquake fault-lines.¹⁰ According to Google's A.I., in the past 40–50 years, the number of major earthquakes has exceeded the long-term average by no small amount.

Then in the last of v.8 Jesus explains something about the nature of this and other signs. He says, "These are the beginnings of sorrows." The word translated "sorrows" (*odin*) means "birth pangs," suggesting that the world at that time will be like a woman going through the pains of childbirth, which become more frequent and intense.¹¹ These signs have always been with us, but since these events are compared to "birth pangs," the indicated disturbances will probably be more frequent and intense as we get closer and closer to the end of the age. So the worst is yet to come, as confirmed in the book of Revelation.¹²

So every time I hear of a major earthquake, it's as if God is reminding us that Jesus is coming!

D. Famines – In the last of v.8 Jesus also predicted there would "be famines" Indeed, there were four famines between 41-54 A.D. during the reign of Claudius in Judea and much of the Roman Empire (cf. Acts 11:28). Once again, there has always been famine. But because of this prophecy, we can expect that famine will continue all the way until the end, in spite of modern farming methods. In fact, famine will likely intensify just prior to the return of Christ. That means that the factors that cause famine are in essence signs of the end times. Note with me the following causes of famine that we can expect:

1. War – Jesus said we can expect war to continue to the end. Famine often follows war (cf. Rev. 6:4, 6). For example, after WWI, 27,000,000 died of hunger.

2. Environmental Disaster - Famine is also caused by man's abuse of the environment. The Gulf Oil disaster in 2010 hindered the harvesting of seafood from the gulf.

3. Population Explosion - In the days prior to the flood, there was a great population explosion. Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the coming of the Son of Man." Though the population explosion is by no means the *cause* of famine, in some highly populated areas, it contributes to the problem.

4. Bad Weather – This would include drought (1 Kings 17:1), excessive rains and flooding, hurricanes, etc.¹³

5. Insects and Rodents contribute to the problem. In India, because of their religion, rats outnumber people 5 to 1. The rats eat up much of the available food.

6. Plant diseases diminish the harvest of food, as well as mold, which is more of a problem than I realized.

7. Green Energy Policies - Cheap energy is needed to produce food that people can afford, but the cost of energy is going up! Wind and solar energy are not cheap and reliable. Oil and natural gas are used to make fertilizer, but such fossil fuels are falling into disfavor and heavy regulation. All of this could make food scarcity a greater problem.

Again, I believe we can expect each of these problems to intensify prior to the return of Christ.

¹⁰ http://www.redorbit.com/news/science/1815603/earthquakes_biggest_killer_over_last_10_years/index.html.

¹¹ This same image is found in other Scriptures as well (see Isa. 13:6-8, Jer. 4:31; 6:24, 13:21; 22:20-23; 1 Thess. 5:3).

¹² In that book we read of 4 earthquakes that take place during the Tribulation. Right before Jesus comes again, we read in **Revelation 16:18**, "and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth."

¹³ In the end time Jesus said there will be "distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 21:25).

In light of this prediction, it would be wise to have your own garden if you are able and think about other measures you can take to provide food security for your family and others.

E. Insurrections - In the last of v.8 Jesus also predicted there would “be troubles.” Based on textual evidence modern translations omit the reference to troubles, but it is found in Luke’s account (21:9). The word translated “troubles” (*tarache*) refers to a disturbance, commotion; a sedition. Luke’s account uses a word (*akatastasia*) that refers to “instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion. We are seeing more and more of this all around the world today. There were social justice riots starting in the summer of 2020 that continued for over a year. The protest over the 2020 presidential election became violent. The protests against Israel have resulted in property damage and some violence. Don’t be surprised if civil unrest becomes a greater problem in the days to come.

This goes hand-in-hand with our Lord’s statement in Matthew 24:12 that “lawlessness will abound.” This is a growing problem in our day.

Yet Jesus warned of more troubles, including:

F. Fatal Diseases - Luke 21:11 mentions pestilences. About 5 years before the fall of Jerusalem, 30,000 people died of disease in a single autumn in Rome. Years later, the Black Death of 1347-1348 claimed a quarter of Europe’s population. More recently, an influenza outbreak during World War I led to the deaths of 25 million people. Three times more people died of the flu than actually died in battle! More recently, over 7 million have died from the coronavirus worldwide.¹⁴

As we have experienced great advances in medical science, many unbelievers perhaps would laugh at the idea that pestilence and disease would be a sign of the end times. Many would have thought that science would eradicate disease. Certainly, great advances have been made, especially in some types of diseases like polio. However, I am sure that Jesus will be proven right. It seems that just when we get the upper hand of one disease, a new disease crops up with even greater fierceness, such as AIDS. There is still no cure for AIDS, but we do them have medications to manage symptoms and prolong life. A flesh-eating virus (Ebola) appeared in Africa that eats an inch of flesh per hour and will kill a human being if its progress is not arrested.

By the way, both famine and pestilence are listed as chastisements from God. 2 Chron. 7:13 says, “When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people....” What should we do in such times? Well, the next verse says, “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Jesus Himself gives one primary application regarding the appearance of these early signs. He says in v.7, “do not be troubled....” Don’t get worried, agitated and fearful every time you hear about these signs. Remember that all of these difficulties are under the sovereign control of God, and He can protect and provide for His people.¹⁵ Don’t worry, but put your faith in Him! Furthermore, though they point to the end and remind us that Jesus is coming, they do *not* mean that the end is upon us. For He says in the last of v.7, “for such things must happen, but the end is

¹⁴ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-death-toll/>.

¹⁵ The original historical context should be kept in mind. Mark wrote his gospel of time when the whole world was falling apart, especially for Israel, and the church was beginning to face Roman persecution. No wonder many must have concluded that the return of Christ was near. Thus, what Jesus said in vv.7-8 was very much needed.

not yet.” Jesus warns that we are not to conclude that these signs, in and of themselves, are indications that the end of the age has come upon us. Don’t be fooled by so-called prophecy experts who are just seeking to increase their followers.¹⁶ Surely Jesus spoke these words to dampen uncontrolled enthusiasm, speculation and false hopes about the future. In v.32 Jesus taught that we are not to set dates, predicting the return of Christ based on such signs. These signs are to direct our hope to Jesus, the one and only Savior. As we observe these signs, let us pray for discernment and avoid being deceived.

By the fulfillment of these signs and the ones that immediately precede the return of Christ, this world is going to find out that government is not our Savior. Science is not our Savior. Jesus is our Savior! He will return and put an end to the curse of war, hunger, sickness, pain and death. Until then, don’t expect life to be easy. There will be times of great difficulty, calling for patient perseverance (v.13b) by the power of the Holy Spirit and inspired by our hope of our ultimate deliverance from such difficulties that is described in vv.26-27.

Finally, I want to conclude this message about the signs of the times by considering:

III. ONE PENDING PROPHECY YET TO BE FULFILLED

Jesus said in v.10, “And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.” Matthew’s account adds to v.10, “then the end will come” (24:14).¹⁷ One of the most important signs pointing to the return of Christ is the Gospel reaching all the nations. Jesus implies that the task of evangelism will continue until the end and *that* should be our focus. This is confirmed by the Great Commission, for Jesus promised to be with His people “to the end of the age.”

So here we have a brief statement of our mission. Israel had clearly rejected Jesus. They had Him arrested and condemned to death. So Jesus turns to the nations. Clearly, Jesus wants to reach the nations with His saving Gospel.

We have seen that Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem. By the time that prophecy was fulfilled, the gospel had already reached much of the Roman world (see Col 1:6, 23). Today, the world mission of the Church is in fact being implemented, and in many areas is gaining ground. In Africa south of the Sahara the expansion is probably greater than many areas. Over 96% of the people of the world now have the Bible, or some portion of it, in their own tongue.

Now this is exciting: We are living in the days when v.10 could indeed be fulfilled. TV, radio, and especially the Internet can reach people with the gospel, even where we can’t send missionaries. In fact, the past 12 months my sermons have been downloaded in 46 countries around the world on the sermonaudio.com platform. It has been estimated that 6.7 billion people are smartphone users. That’s how many have access to the gospel in the palm of their hand!¹⁸

So here we have a great motive to fulfill the Great Commission to get the gospel to the ends of the earth. He will not come again until the mission of the church has been completed.¹⁹ We are getting close. Our Southern Baptist International Mission Board is working to reach the remaining

¹⁶ This kind of thing happened in the Thessalonian church. 2 Thess. 2:1-2, “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.”

¹⁷ Even Old Testament prophecies predicted the conversion of the Gentiles (e.g., Psalm 96; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6, 12; 52:10; 16:6), Brooks, p.210. Jesus revealed how this would come about.

¹⁸ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/203734/global-smartphone-penetration-per-capita-since-2005>.

¹⁹ Garland says, “The timing of the end depends entirely on God, not on any human activity...” (p.494). One's interpretation of v.10 will depend on how one views God's sovereignty interfacing with human responsibility.

3,000 unreached people groups,²⁰ a number that is dropped in half the past 14 years. So we need to give generously to the Lottie Moon Christmas offering to send out more missionaries and support the ones on the field. We also need to pray for one or more unreached people groups. Pray that God will get the gospel to them, and open their hearts to receive it? Some of us also need to go. There are short-term mission trip opportunities available through our IMB. Let's complete the mission!

Conclusion and Appeal: Jesus said in v.31, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." He *is* coming again. He promised! Unbelievers will face the wrath of God leading up to His return, and also when He returns (2 Th. 1:8-9). If Jesus were to come today, would you be ready for the return of Christ? You're not ready if you have not repented of your sins and placed your faith in Jesus as Savior. But suppose you say, "I am going to wait until later to give my heart to Jesus." I must warn you that based on 2 Thess. 2:10-12, those who have rejected the gospel by the start of the very last days will not repent, even in the presence of the great difficulties and judgments. I believe the only ones who will be saved *after* the tribulation begins are those who haven't had an opportunity to hear. Accept Christ now while you have the opportunity! Then you can truly sing the great hymn, "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow...."

Sources: Irvin Baxter, Jr., "Earthquakes: Sign of the End Time?" *End Time Magazine*, March/April 1995; James A. Brooks, *New American Commentary: Mark* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991); Alan Carr, www.sermonnotebook.org; Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hgts, VA: Published by Author), 2024; David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:80] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2021); A.T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures*, Vol. IV (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931, accessed through *Online Bible*); Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978); Jerry Vines (notes from sermon tape of 4/15/84); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987); A. Skevington Wood, *Signs of the Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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²⁰ <https://www.imb.org/give/project/reaching-3000-uupgs>.