

Coming in the Clouds

Scripture: Mark 13:24–27

Code: 41-68

Let's open the Word of God to the thirteenth chapter of Mark and we have some great challenges to discuss the great event, the culminating event of history of the world, the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Obviously this is an event that transcends this one text. We'll do our best to give you a good view of it if not an absolutely comprehensive view.

Now as I told you when we started the book of Mark, we're trying to move a little more rapidly through the book of Mark, and we're doing that. We're actually going to finish the book of Mark early in June and that will be about a two-year effort to get through Mark, that's pretty good, thinking that Luke took us ten years. So we're definitely taking it at a faster clip.

It is also true that in this particular section on the Second Coming of Christ, I preached fourteen messages when we went through Luke, and we're covering it in just a very few. So all of that to say that if you want the full story, you can go back and listen to the Luke passage in Luke 21, or you can go all the way back to Matthew 24 and 25, or you can get the books that John Rourke mentioned a little while ago. But the intent for us is not to exhaust every detail, but to give you a sense of the significance and the truth of the passages that are before us.

Now we come, this evening, to chapter 13 verses 24 to 27. It is a brief passage. It is a massive subject. Verse 24 of Mark 13, "But in those days after that Tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory, and then He will send forth the angels and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven."

Now a little bit of a setting and I know you're up to speed on the setting because we're moving through this both morning and evening. But for those who haven't been with us, just to set the scene here a little bit, this is Wednesday evening of Passion Week. Friday our Lord will be crucified, Sunday rise from the dead. So this is the end of His earthly ministry for all intents and purposes, even though after the resurrection He spent another 40 days on earth in a glorified form. He spent that time seen only by those who believed in Him and speaking of things pertaining to His Kingdom.

His public ministry comes to an end this week and most particularly comes to an end on this Wednesday. His public ministry ended late Wednesday. He left the temple ground. He left the city of Jerusalem. Went out the eastern gate of the temple mount and up the Mount of Olives and He's sitting on the Mount of Olives with His disciples and they're looking back at the city of Jerusalem and Jesus pronounces judgment on that city at the beginning of chapter 13. He says in verse 2, "Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down," speaking of the temple, that massive edifice that Herod had been building for decades and will be building for a period of eighty years before it was finally complete it would be torn down just a handful of years before it was finally completed. That history came to pass in 70 A.D. when the Romans came and did just

that...destroyed the temple, destroyed Jerusalem, and went on to destroy almost a thousand towns and villages throughout Israel, slaughtering Jews from one end of the land to the other in an absolute holocaust.

So our Lord is talking then about the destruction of the temple and the judgment of God to come on an unbelieving apostate Israel. With that in mind, the disciples, namely Peter, James, John and Andrew, pull Him aside and ask Him, "Tell us...in verse 4...when will these things be and what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" Not only the destruction of Jerusalem, when will that be? But beyond that, what will be the sign of Your coming? And Matthew says they asked that. And what will be the sign of the end of the age?

What they're really asking is, now we know You are the Messiah. You are the Son of God, You are the Anointed One, You are the King, we acknowledge that, we worship You; we want to know when are You going to establish Your Kingdom? When will judgment come and the establishment of the promised Kingdom? Which had been the burning hope in the hearts of Jews for literally millennia, since the promises of God to Abraham, the promises of God to David and the promises of God reiterated to the prophets throughout their history. When will the Messianic Kingdom come? When will the Lord become the King and rule in a righteous Kingdom of peace over the whole earth? When will Jerusalem receive its promised blessing? When will all this happen? You're the Messiah, so it must be soon since You're here. That was the assumption.

Our Lord answers the question by telling them that there is going to be an intervening period of history before the Kingdom will be established. And it's not going to be good. In fact, He says in verses 5 through 13 that human history will go on and the implication here is not only for weeks and months but even years, and there will be much religious deception. That's very clear in verse 6. "Many will come in My name saying, 'I am He,' and will mislead many." There will be great disasters through war as well as natural cataclysms like earthquakes and famines. These things are just the beginning.

Then verses 9 to 15, "There will be persecution of believers. So this is how human history is going to go. It's going to be a very difficult time for planet Earth and life will be characterized by religious deception, by disasters, both caused by man in war and conflict, and cataclysmic natural events as well, and persecution...persecution. That will be how history goes.

As we learned this morning, at the end of human history, there will come a very special period called in verse 19 a time of Tribulation...a time of tribulation. This is when the birth pains become more rapid and more severe. Human history is going to be a painful season. The pain will be stretched out a little bit and it will be moderated. But there will come a period at the end of human history when pain will come rapid-fire and extremely severe. What triggers that is indicated in verse 14, the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION. The midpoint in that final period of Tribulation, there will come an abomination of blasphemous act that will desolate. And we learned this morning that Daniel is the one who speaks of that, Daniel 9:27, Daniel 12:10-13 and it is a time in the future when Antichrist, the prince that is to come, goes into the temple which will be restored to some measure in that period of time and desecrates the temple and sets up the worship of himself in that place. That is why verse 14 says "The ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION will be standing where it should not be." There will be an Antichrist setting up his rule and his worship in the very temple of God. When that happens, that will trigger the second-half of that Tribulation, a period called The Great Tribulation and things will be worse than they have ever been in the history of the world. The people who are alive at that

time who read about this are to flee. As soon as they see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION take place in the temple, they are to flee to the mountains, they are not to go back to their homes to take anything, they're to pray that it doesn't happen in winter or on Sabbath, or that they're not pregnant or with nursing children because it will slow down the speed with which you need to escape the deadly force of Antichrist that will be unleashed in that hour.

The Lord will shorten the time; shorten it to just three and a half years. We learned that from Daniel and in the book of Revelation, they all say the same thing. It's a three and a half year period, twelve hundred and sixty days, three and a half years, 42 months, a time, times, and half a time...all references to that three and a half-year period. And it is shortened so that everybody isn't slaughtered. So you have some people alive to go into the Kingdom when the Lord comes to establish the Millennial Kingdom.

Now we get to verse 24. "After those days...after that Tribulation that is yet to come at the end of human history, after that Tribulation then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." The great culmination then of human history is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. This is not hard to see or hard to understand. It is crystal-clear in Scripture.

Our Lord later was asked by them, after His resurrection and His 40 days of teaching them in Acts chapter 1, you remember that He was speaking to them of things pertaining to the Kingdom for 40 days, Acts 1:3. And in verse 6 of Acts 1, they said to Him, "Lord, is it at this time that You're restoring the Kingdom to Israel?" And He responds, "It's not for you to know times, or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority. And then He literally was taken up out of their sight, a cloud received Him out of their sight and two angels appeared and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

When Jesus comes, it will be in the very same way as He left. Visibly, manifestly in clouds, they saw it, they watched it, they looked at it and that is exactly the way He will come back, in clouds, visibly. In fact, Revelation 1 verse 7 says, "Every eye will see Him."

In 2 Thessalonians 1:5, we read that there's a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God for which you are suffering, for after all, it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you and to give relief to you who are afflicted, and to us as well, when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.

It is not going to be a secret event. He's not going to sneak in. He's not going to come and nobody knows it. As I said this morning, there are people who think that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was the Second Coming. There's no way that you can possibly distort Scripture to come to that conclusion. The world is familiar with the first coming of Christ. They know the elements of that...Bethlehem, the manger, the shepherds, the star, Joseph and Mary, Herod, the magi, the angels, a humble arrival indeed. And it's filled with sentiment. But the Second Coming will be very, very different. It is an important coming, as important as the first coming, in fact, the culmination of His first coming. In spite of the urgency and importance, the dominating importance of the return of Jesus Christ, it seems to be that there are many people who ignore this greatest of all events. It is regularly understated. It is confused. It is relegated to a non-priority status by Christians, both preachers and parishioners. It ought not to be so. It was said of that Thessalonian church that they

were a true church waiting for the Lord from heaven. We need to live in the anticipation of His coming cause he who has this hope in him purifies himself.

All right then, let's look at the text and this important event is given to us here in some very, very graphic terms. I want to talk about several features of it and we'll break it down into some manageable bites. Number one, the sequence...the sequence; let's get a bit of a chronology. Verse 24, "But in those days," what days? Those days just spoken of, those days of the Tribulation, those days of the Great Tribulation, those days of the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, and the three and a half years after that, which, you remember, this morning is described in detail by Revelation 6 through 19. In those days, after that Tribulation, 42 months, or twelve hundred and sixty days.

Now we don't know exactly when after. No man knows the date or the hour. We know the general period. But at the end of the book of Daniel, Daniel makes reference to a period of twelve-hundred and ninety days, he adds 30 days. And then he makes reference to thirteen hundred and thirty-five days. You can look at it in the last chapter and the last verses of Daniel. Daniel adds then 75 extra days. Some time in that period of 75 extra days we won't know the day or the hour, the Lord will come and establish His Kingdom, but it will not happen until after the Tribulation. Literally the Greek says, "In those days after that Tribulation." Matthew 24:29 says, "Immediately after the Tribulation, in a matter of days....in a matter of days." Luke calls that event as the days of vengeance, so at the conclusion of the days of vengeance when God has fulfilled all that has been written in Scripture about final judgment, all that has been written in Scripture about final salvation, when all of that is completed and the Tribulation is over and all its horrible judgments have been exhausted, including the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments, and God's salvation has gathered in all those who are Jews, and all those who are Gentiles from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, all of human history is over...when that happens and is complete, then the Lord will come...then the Lord will come.

Now, just to go back for a minute and make a point that is very important, when the Lord predicted in verses 1 and 2 that the temple would be destroyed, He was exactly right. That was a massive prediction and face it, Jesus didn't have an army to pull it off. When Jesus said "Not one stone will be left upon another," that was not something He could achieve as a man. He didn't have the force to do that. He was predicting an event that would have to be done by someone that virtually from a worldly perspective He had absolutely no power over and no authority with...the Romans. But He got it absolutely right because He is omniscient.

And then in verses 5 to 13, He describes human history as being characterized by false religious deception, disasters of all kinds, relentless disasters, and the persecution of true believers, was He right about that? That is exactly how you must see human history. He was right about that.

When we come to verses 14 to 23 and the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, that is described in detail as to what it will be in Daniel 9 and in Daniel 12, and there's even an illustration of it in Daniel 11, a historical event by the Selucid king Antiochus Epiphanes who virtually did that when he set up the altar to Zeus in the temple and desecrated the place and abominated God. Our Lord knows what is coming. It was an accurate prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, an accurate description of the nature of human history, and you can trust an accurate prediction of the abomination in the time of Tribulation, and you can also be certain that our trustworthy Lord will return in exactly the way He says He will return.

So the sequence...Tribulation, after all this increasing suffering in the world, in the birth pains, and then the Lord returns. That's the sequence. Let's look at the staging...the staging. This event needs some staging. The return of Jesus Christ from heaven with power and glory will occur after God has set the stage and He will set the stage in an incomprehensible way. Verse 24, in all this language here that describes the staging is borrowed from the Old Testament. The reference in verse 24 comes out of Joel chapter 2 and 3. The reference in verse 25 comes out of Isaiah 34. The reference in verse 26 comes out of Daniel chapter 7. So this is all drawn out of the Old Testament. The New Testament is in perfect accord with and agreement with the Old Testament. Here's the staging. "The sun will be darkened...the sun goes out. The moon will not give its light. The stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken."

Now we know that in the period of the Tribulation, right?, and the Great Tribulation, great signs will be occurring on the earth and in the sky. We read them, Revelation 6, Revelation 8, Revelation 16 and in between. So we know those things will already be going on. But here is the final staging. "The sun goes dark. The moon goes dark because it gets its light from the sun, the stars fall out of heaven. The powers that are in the heavens will be shaken," which means the power that holds the heavenly bodies in their place, in their orbit, doing what they normally, predictably can continue to do will be altered. That's what to expect. The sun goes dark. The moon goes dark. The stars go dark. And everything is careening in space. It can't be but days until the Lord comes, because how long could people survive?

This is not new information to the disciples, by the way, or to any of the Jews who knew the Old Testament. Let me take you on a quick look at what the Old Testament promised. Isaiah 13 is a place to start, and we won't be able to cover all the passages with regard to this, but Isaiah 13 looks at this day of the Lord, as its called, Day of the Lord is a term used of judgment, God's divine judgment and the final culminating Day of the Lord is described here in Isaiah 13:6, "Wail for the Day of the Lord is near. It will come as destruction from the Almighty, therefore all hands will fall limp and every man's heart will melt." That's...we're going to see that in a minute in the New Testament as well. "They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them. They will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look at one another in astonishment, their face is aflame. Behold the Day of the Lord is coming, cruel with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation and He will exterminate its sinners from it, for the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light. The sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity. I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble and the earth will be shaken from its place. At the fury of the Lord of hosts, in the day of His burning anger. And it will be like a hunted gazelle or like sheep with none to gather them, they will each turn to his own people and each one flee to his own land. Anyone who is found will be thrust through and anyone who is captured will fall by the sword. Their little ones will be dashed to pieces before their eyes. Their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished."

The whole world is going to turn on itself in an unbelievable holocaust of wicked behavior under this indescribable judgment of God.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, the language is the same. "Behold," verse 1, "the Lord lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants." Verse 3 says, "The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the Lord has spoken this word." This is

destruction of the planet.

Verse 6, “A curse devours the earth, those who live in it are held guilty. The inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men are left.” The end of the chapter, verse 23, “The moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and His glory will be before His elders.”

Isaiah had a lot to say about this. It is repeated again in the language of the thirty-fourth chapter. “Draw near, O nations, to hear and listen, O peoples, let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it, for the Lord’s indignation is against all the nations, His wrath against all His enemies. He has utterly destroyed them, given them over to slaughter.” It goes on to describe many of the very same things. “The sword of the Lord,” verse 6, “is filled with blood.” It’s a horrible end to this world.

Turn to Joel chapter 2 and verse 10, this again looks at the mighty visitation of the judgment of God at the end. The earth quakes, verse 10, Joel 2, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon grow dark. The stars lose their brightness. The Lord utters His voice before His army, His heavenly army. Surely His camp is very great, for strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome and who can endure it?”

Then verse 31, Joel 2, “The sun will be turned to darkness, the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.” Chapter 3 verse 15 of Joel, “The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness.” Even the prophet Ezekiel saw the same thing, and I’m giving you these because I want you to know that the disciples who knew the scriptures and knew what the scriptures said about the end would have known about this. In Ezekiel 38, “In My zeal, in My blazing wrath, I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.” This is parallel to the book of Revelation and the events that occur at the end of the Tribulation time. “The fish of the sea, the birds of the heaven, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, all the men on the face of the earth will shake at My presence. The mountains will be thrown down. The steep pathways will collapse, every wall will fall to the ground. I will call for a sword against Him on all My mountains. Everyman’s sword will be against His brother.” That’s what I was saying, not only will God be destroying as the system collapses, but men will be slaughtering each other. Verse 23, “I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, make Myself known in the sight of many nations and they will know that I am the Lord.” The stage is set for Him to be revealed.

The prophet Haggai essentially gives very similar prophecies. Haggai chapter 2, verse 6, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, once more in a little while I’m going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and also the dry land. I will shake all the nations. They will come with the wealth of all nations. I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.” The prophet Zephaniah, just one book before Haggai, essentially the same thing, “The great day of the Lord,” chapter 1 verse 14, “near and coming very quickly, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and battle cry,” and so it goes. And verse 18 says, “On that day, all the earth will be devoured. In the fire of His jealousy He’ll make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth.”

This is the stage that is set. So what our Lord said there, about the sun being dark and the moon not giving its light, the stars falling from heaven, the powers shaken is exactly what the Old Testament promised at the Great Day of the Lord when final judgment is brought and the Lord establishes His

glory before the whole watching world and sets up His Kingdom.

So you see the sequence and something of the staging these amazing events. I want to add another point, the shock...the shock. I read from the prophets, from Isaiah, that men will fear and they will tremble and they will be terrified and they will be afraid.

Well you can see that because our Lord actually said that, according to Luke, when He was giving this message. In Luke's account, parallel account, our Lord says this in Luke 21:25, "There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars," we just read about those, the staging, and on earth dismay among nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves." And then this, "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 they will see the Son of Man." Again, we're back at the staging, and what we learn here is that in the middle of the staging, the world is going to go in to shock on the earth, please notice, dismay...dismay, *sunecho*, it means anxiety, it means anguish, it means terror. And then perplexity. Only here in the New Testament is this word used, *aporeo*, it means just that, confusion. People won't even be able to comprehend this. They will have no rational explanation for it, consequently it says men will be fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world. Fainting, *apopsucho*, means they'll die, they'll die, they'll expire. That's to die, to breathe out. People will be scared to death, not only because of what is happening, because of what they fear is next in the sequence, lethal, emotional trauma causing rapid pulse, changes in blood pressure, cardiac collapse. That's the shock.

That takes us back to Mark and the next point I want to make is the sign...the sign. "What is the sign of Your coming?" they said, according to Matthew 24, what is the sign of Your coming? What do we look for? Well He said, "There will be one sign that will tell people in that future time that they're in the Tribulation, that's the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION in the temple. But the question they had is what is the sign of Your coming? What is it? Here it is, the final sign. "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory."

To put it simply, the sun is the sign...the sun is the sign. Matthew 24:30 puts it this way, "The sign of the Son of Man...the Sign of the Son of Man." There have been preliminary signs through all of human history that were headed in the direction that Jesus says we are. Look at history. There will be in the future all of those signs that will unfold clearly, visibly that are part of the great time of Tribulation. But this is THE sign, in the dark, no more moon, no more sun, no more stars, pitch black, terrified people dropping dead out of cardiac arrest because the fear is so monumental, then...then, verse 26, then....don't know exactly how many days, that's...Daniel gives us some room there, after the three-and-a-half years, they will see the Son of Man. And that's the sign. This is the moment, all redemptive history goes toward that moment.

And I can't help but say this, you don't need to worry about preserving the planet...please. You are wasting your time. Your money, your energy, and your brain power, the planet's future is determined and it has nothing to do with you or Al Gore...nothing, or anybody else. It is determined. This is where history is going, folks, and it will be here until all of this devastation comes and all the environmentalists on the planet together at the highest level can't stop this. He's coming. He came to die, He comes to kill.

Celestial disasters, not for a long time, the final staging and the arrival of Christ is like the flash of lightning when He comes. He will appear. This is such a glorious event, many of the church fathers

actually thought that the sign would be a cross, a fiery emblazoned cross across the sky against the absolute blackness. Cyril of Jerusalem, Chrysostom, Origen talked about that. Others have thought that it would be some heavenly glow. No, the sign is not a cross, the sign is not a glow, the sign is the Son of Man in full power and full glory.

Oh by the way, the New Jerusalem, the capital city of heaven doesn't have any lights there because the Lamb is the light of that city. The Lamb is the light. So the light that shines from the glorified Christ, the light of God in full blaze that shines from Him is enough to go through the cubed heavenly New Jerusalem, splatter through all the bejeweled foundations of stones and gates and through the transparent gold streets and refract its light to the end of the universe, so it will be plenty of light in the darkness when He comes.

It's an unmistakable sign. Revelation 6 even describes people as saying, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." It's going to be so frightening that people are going to crawl into caves if they can find them in the dark and try to save themselves.

It also tells us there in verse 26, borrowed from Daniel 7:13, that amazing vision in Daniel 7, that is...that is such an important vision because there you have the vision of Christ taking His vision. I kept looking in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heave, one like a Son of Man was coming and to Him was given dominion, glory and a Kingdom, that all the people's nations and men of every language might serve Him, His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away. His Kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. So there's Daniel's picture of this moment when He comes in the clouds with great power and glory. Daniel said, "With the clouds of heaven," I just read it to you. John says in Revelation, He comes with clouds. Mark says, as we read, He's coming in clouds. Luke says He's coming in a cloud. And Matthew says He's coming on the clouds. So in, on, with, clouds, folks, clouds. He comes with clouds surrounding Him, lit clouds.

They are often God's chariot, by the way, Psalm 104, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, O Lord, my God, Thou art very great, Thou art clothed with honor and majesty, who covers Thyself with light as with a garment, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, who lays the beams of His chamber in the waters, who makes the clouds His chariot." God rides the clouds. Isaiah 19:1, the burden of Egypt, "Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud." So clouds are associated with the movement of God. Even the prophet Zechariah gives us a bit of a glimpse of this. "In that day, 14:6 of Zechariah, there will be no light, the sun goes out, the moon goes out," the prophets all agree on this, the New Testament writers all agree, "the luminaries will dwindle, it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light." And that light will be the one who is the light. In that day there will be no light, I just read you Zechariah. The luminaries will disappear. Literally you can translate the Hebrew, "The bright ones will fade." There's no light. It's a unique day which is known only to God, only He understands the uniqueness of it.

There's never been anything like it because since the creation, it's been evening and morning, and evening and morning, and evening and morning, and all of a sudden there won't be any evening, and there won't be any morning. Alas, for that great day, Jeremiah 30, verse 7 says, "For there's never been a day like it, but it will come about that at evening there will be light." That's when the light Himself appears.

I can't resist reminding you of some of these great statements by the Old Testament prophets to

show the cohesiveness of the Word of God. Isaiah chapter 30, I think it's verse 26, "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun. The light of the sun will be seven times brighter like the light of seven days on the day the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted."

When He comes back and turns on the light, when He relights the moon, the moon will have the light of the sun and the sun will have seven times brighter light than we've ever known it to have. When He turns back the lights on His glorious Kingdom. Maybe that's why the desert blossoms like a rose, who knows what the effect of all that is going to be? The light will shine in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now let's just talk about the fact that He comes with power and great power and glory at the end of verse 26. He comes with great power and glory. You have to see this, so look at Revelation 19 because you have a very clear description of this very event. Revelation 19, verse...well, let's pick it up at verse 11, we could go back before that, but let's just pick it up at verse 11 for the sake of time. "I saw heaven open." John is getting a vision of this moment. "In the darkness and I saw the heaven open in this vision. Behold, a white horse and He who sat on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war."

He comes not only to establish His Kingdom, of course, but He comes to destroy the ungodly who still remain on the earth. Heaven opens to release the conquering King. The white horse, not as a lamb, in His first coming. Not riding the foal of a donkey at His false coronation. But He comes like any great Roman conqueror would come, triumphantly riding on a white horse. That's the analogy. That's the picture that lets us know that He's coming in triumphant. He is the one who is called Faithful and True.

What is that about? That means He comes to keep His promise. He comes to keep His Word. He comes to do what He said He would do. He comes, as well, in righteousness which means He must act against sin. Righteousness will act against sin. Sin will have reached its epoch proportions during that period called the Tribulation. The world will be in the worst condition morally its ever been in. He comes to judge.

Remember John chapter 5, "All judgment was committed to Him. He would raise the dead and judge the living and the dead." He would cast people into the judgment of condemnation, as well as draw them into His Kingdom. When He came the first time, wicked men judged and condemned Him. When He comes the second time, He will condemn and judge them.

And then He makes war. He wages war. Exodus 15:3 says, "The Lord is a soldier, the Lord is a warrior." Heaven can never be at peace with sin. Heaven can never leave Satan to have exclusive control of this planet. It's only temporary. God's patience has a limit. Sin will be punished. Sinners will be punished because God is righteous and God is just. So here comes the conqueror with the sword of insulted majesty. This conqueror comes not as others, out of pride, ambition, power, covetousness, but in perfect righteousness and strict accord with every holy interest.

And in verse 12, it says, "His eyes are a flame of fire." That is, He has laser vision, nothing escapes His sight. "On His head are many diadems." How did He get many crowns? Because, according to chapter 17 in the book of Revelation, He has taken over the whole world. He is the one who is Lord of lords and King of kings. There are no other rulers left on the earth when He returns. He wears all

the crowns.

And He has a name, which no one knows, except Himself. Can't tell you how many times people have asked me, "What is that name?" Just for the record, I have absolutely no idea what that name is. But then that's what it says. But I'll tell you, I'll give you a hint. It is a name that connects to the hymn we sang this morning. Remember the hymn, first hymn we sung was for all the glorious names. If we got all the glorious names, put them all together, they wouldn't tell the story of the greatness of Christ. There's another name we don't know that is the consummate, final, ultimate name.

Verse 13 says, "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood." This isn't His first battle. This isn't His first war. It is the blood of His enemies that stains His garments. Second Thessalonians says it's going to be a bloodbath when He arrives. It says He will deal out retribution to those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, they will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power when He comes to be glorified in His saints. His name is called the Word of God.

Does that remind you of John 1? "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." And the Word is God. His name is the Word of God. He is God revealed. God reveals Himself in the written Scripture and He reveals Himself in the living Christ. His name is the Word of God.

God cannot be separated from His Word. He's exalted His Word equal to His name, Psalm 138:2, this is a perfect representation of God...the Son of God. He is the full manifestation, the full revelation of God. He is God made known.

He's not alone. The armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, fine and clean, were following Him on white horses. Who's in heaven? Who is this? Well angels are there. Angels are there. Matthew 25:31 says He comes with His angels. Old Testament saints are there with Him according to Jude 14 and 15, tribulation saints will be there who have literally died as martyrs during the time of Tribulation and have been taken to heaven. And the church will be there. I believe the church is there. The church could be being described along with all other believers as those in verse 8 who are clothed in fine linen, bright and clean, fine linen are the righteous acts of the saints. So this is saints, not angels. So we're part of the entourage. Does He come with His angels? Absolutely. Scripture is clear that He comes with His angels. That's what it says. He says that, according to the words of Matthew. All the saints of heaven, as well as the angels of heaven accompany Him.

And they're following on white horses, symbolic again, symbolic of triumphant, symbolic of victory. And these come with Him. Why? To enter into His Kingdom and reign. Go over to chapter 20 verse 4, "I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God and those who hadn't worshiped the Antichrist or his image and hadn't received his mark on their forehead or on their hand, they came to live...to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead didn't come to life until a thousand years were complete. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection.

So the believers, the saints that are in heaven, many of whom were martyred, come with Him to

reign in His Kingdom. He establishes His rule when He arrives, verse 15. From His mouth comes a sharp sword so that with it He may strike down the nations. This is very likely the final blow, struck at the great battle of Armageddon that ends it all. He will rule them with a rod of iron. And He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God Almighty, like crushing grapes, the wrath of God coming through Him as God's executioner shall crush the ungodly.

His mouth has a sharp sword. That is symbolic of the slaying power of His Word. You see that back in the picture back in chapter 1 verse 16. He deals out death with a Word. Just as He could give life, He can kill. Isaiah 11:4, "And He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked."

So He will smite the nations. That means the world. Then He will set up His Kingdom and rule with a rod of iron. Psalm 2 says that, doesn't it? Psalm 2:8 and 9 and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God Almighty. You can read more about that in Revelation chapter 14.

Now down to verse 16, "On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." On His robe, on His thigh. A banner, probably in John's vision he sees that banner stretched all the way from his shoulder all the way down across His thigh, hanging all the way down is this banner that says King of kings and Lord of lords, indicating that He is now the sovereign and the single monarch of the world.

And what follows this? You well know. A slaughter is so profound, verses 17 to 19 describe the slaughter. Birds are going to come in, in that time, eat the flesh of kings and commanders and mighty men and horses and free men and slaves and small and great. It's going to be an absolute disastrous situation on earth. And the carnage will be food for the scavenger birds and then the Antichrist will be taken and the False Prophet will be taken and all the people who followed them and the two of them will be thrown alive into the Lake of Fire which burned with brimstone and the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

And then, come to chapter 20, Satan is bound and Christ establishes His Kingdom. Christ establishes His Kingdom. I don't think they'll be any scoffers then, do you? I think people are going to be saying, "Where is the sign of His coming? All things continue the same." Not in that day...not in that day.

I know the question keeps coming back, "Where will we be when this happens?" And the answer to that, as I told you before, I believe the church is Raptured at the beginning of the period of the Tribulation. I believe that from Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10, from 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15, John 14, where Jesus puts it this way, He says, "If I go away, I will come again to receive you unto Myself that where I am, there you may be also." I'm coming to get you. I'm coming for you. He has to come for us, before He can come with us.

When you read 1Thessalonians 4 which describes the moment, the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ rise first and all that are alive and remain are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. When you read 1 Corinthians 15, "We shall not all sleep," that means die, "We shall all be changed and gathered up into glory." When you read John 14 and He is coming for us, in those pictures of the Lord coming for His church, there is never any word about judgment...never any word about

judgment. The church will be gathered into heaven. In fact, we're in heaven already in Revelation because we're up there having a feast with our Lord. Verse 9, we're at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Who's the Lamb's bride? The church. We've got to go to the marriage, we're the bride. We come back with Him. Well that will be an event like no other event.

Now back to mark, for a minute. We looked at a lot of the aspects of this. We could look at a lot more, say a lot more. But let's leave it where it is. We've looked at the sequence. We've looked at the staging. We've looked at the shock. We've looked at the sign. Let's look at the saints...the saints. Verse 27,
"He will send forth the angels and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

Luke actually records that Jesus said, "When these things begin to take place, straighten up, lift up your eyes, your redemption is near. When all of this happens, if the believers who are still alive at that point, and there will be many of them because they're protected to go into the Kingdom, they've found a place of refuge, there will be people who heard the two witnesses, heard the 144 thousand, heard believers from every tribe and tongue and people and nation preaching the gospel. Saw the angel in the sky proclaiming the gospel, came to faith in Christ, a massive host of people will be saved, many of them will be slaughtered and martyred, but there will be many protected and preserved, they will then be gathered into His Kingdom. Matthew 24:31 says, "He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds from one end of the sky to the other, from one end of the earth and from one end of heaven. In other words, all the elect everywhere are going to be gathered together for the Kingdom. Some of them will still be on the earth and some of them will come down from heaven. But all of them will be gathered. He will send His angels and Matthew says, "With a great sound of a trumpet to gather the elect." All the elect then will come down for the Kingdom, the four winds, like the four corners of the earth, from everywhere. The farthest end of the earth and the farthest end of heaven is another way of saying absolutely everywhere, earth and heaven, we all come together for the Kingdom. You're going to be there if you know the Lord. We'll all be there...we'll all be there.

"Then, He will sit on His glorious throne." Now if there's anybody in the seats of power, educationally and politically, who want to know the truth about the future, I am available to come and tell the true story. So are you. Imagine, you know the truth about the future. What a gift.

Father, thank You for Your truth, for the fellowship that we have around it, for how it ties our hearts together because we are really knit together by common love, we're knit together by common conviction, we're knit together by common belief. The reason that we love each other, the reason that we care about each other, the reason that we enjoy each other, the reason that we support each other, encourage each other, come alongside each other, pray for each other is because we are bound together by this common set of beliefs, common convictions, the once-for-all-delivered-to-the-saints faith. We have been knit together in love because we believe the same things, and we say the same things and those are the things that bind us...mind to mind and heart to heart. We thank You, Lord, that we not only understand the past and the glories of the birth of Christ, the glories of the cross of Christ, the glories of the resurrection of Christ, but we understand the future and the astonishing realities of His return. And we know it's nearer than it's ever been. We're not going to be foolish and attempt to set a date but there really is nothing that has to happen before the signless event of the Rapture of the church snatches us away. And the way the world is shaping itself up these days, the kind of events that we see in the book of Revelation could occur. We have that kind

of technology. We have that kind of societal structure around the world. These things don't seem remote. And we're amazed again, Lord, that when you painted the picture of the end, it was all about the Middle East and it was all about Israel, it wasn't about South America, it wasn't about China, it wasn't about the United States. And in reality, the focus of the world even now is on the Middle East. Your history is on course, we know that. You are the God who not only understands history, but ordains history. And we thank You that You have also ordained our history by making us part of Your elect and bringing us to Yourself in Christ so that we might reign with Christ for a thousand years on this earth and forever and ever in the new heaven and the new earth. This is...this is overwhelming to us that You have been so kind because we are so unworthy. Thank You for Your grace. May we be worthy, as worthy as we can be by demonstrating obedience and love toward you. In the name of Christ. Amen.

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