



Christ Reformed Community Church

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October 30, 2022

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“The Olivet Discourse, Part 2” Mark 13:9–13

Mark 13, and we’re looking at this larger section known as “The Olivet Discourse.” This morning we want to focus our attention on verses 9 through 13, and that’s the text that I want to read for us, so please pay attention as we read God’s Word. Jesus says in verse 9:

But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Please be seated. May God add His reading to His Holy Word, and let’s ask for His blessing.

Father, we come before this text of scripture, knowing it is a difficult text to interpret, knowing that we are weak in and of ourselves, but knowing by the power of the Holy Spirit, the illuminating work that He does in the lives of true believers who have been given the very mind of Christ, that we can understand this text, and yet we feel weak, and we pray for Your strength. We are humbled by the power of Your Word, and we’re also humbled by what Your Word says here. It’s almost as if these verses are verses that even speak about the great tribulation that the Reformers themselves endured as they stood before governors and kings, some put to death. But by the preserving power of Your Holy Spirit, their faith was kept intact, and they endured until the end. May that be true of us as well, and may we understand these verses in their own context, but then also how they apply to our lives. We pray You would do this for Your glory and for the sake of Your kingdom and our good. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Last week, we began looking at Mark chapter 13. If you want to cross reference to Mark 13, you can find that in Matthew’s Gospel and in Luke’s Gospel, Matthew 24 and Luke chapter 21. We saw last week that the events described in this chapter, and in particular, since our task last week was simply looking at verses 1 through 8 was that these verses reveal a period of judgment, a period of tribulation, we could say, on ethnic Israel for breaking the covenant that they had with God. We saw that this judgment on Israel occurred in the year AD 70 at the hands of the Romans, who served as the human instrument of God’s wrath. We noted some difficult points of interpretation because there are many who would see much of what takes place here in Mark 13 as still yet future. And without going into detail this morning—listen to the recording and you can

be filled in later. Without going into detail, suffice it to say, we do not really look at Mark 13 as something that is futuristic. We look at it as something that is historic, something that has already happened. That is the way we need to view this text because of a number of different issues, one of which we pointed out last week in verse 30 when Jesus says, *“Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”* *Tauta panta*, *“all these things.”* Everything Jesus says in Mark 13 would not take place until the end of the lives of the apostles or the end of the generation of the apostles, which means *for them* what Jesus says is future, but *for us*, what He says took place in the past, around the events associated with AD 70, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jerusalem itself.

Now, if you weren't with us last week, what I just said to you, I took about twenty-five minutes to explain, so if you're lost forget what I said. Go back and listen to the recording later—not now—and try your best to keep up this morning. But we want to make our approach very simple to this complicated text, so simple that I've told you essentially all Jesus is doing in Mark chapter 13 in this Olivet Discourse is He is making one simple observation. His one point is that God has judged Israel, and by doing that, He has ended the old covenant. And in order to do that, God wants to show the seriousness of this, so He sends all sorts of signs that will point forward to this judgment of Israel; namely, the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. But He gives these signs to true Jewish believers led by the apostles so that they may be saved. They might not be in the temple and in Jerusalem when this occurs. So, it's a message of salvation for the true people of God, the ending of the old covenant, the judgment of Israel, which ended an era of history. The old covenant has ended, which means a new covenant has come, a new epoch, a new age in which Jesus will rule and reign after His crucifixion and resurrection. That's the observation Jesus makes. We are entering a new period of human history unlike anything anyone has seen before. That's why you have all of these signs that point forward to one of the greatest calamities that have ever occurred in the history of the world; the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. That's the observation Jesus makes, but as you know, Jesus is a preacher, so He has several points. And we have reduced essentially what He says in this chapter to seven sweeping points, or seven sweeping statements.

The first one was found in verses 1 and 2, what we called the supernatural prediction. Verse 1 tells us Jesus came out of the temple with the disciples and the disciples are telling Jesus what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings make up the temple complex, which it was one of the wonders of the ancient world, but Jesus took this occasion to make a supernatural prediction in verse 2 where He says, *“Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”* In other words, God is going to destroy this temple, and it's going to devastate this city. This was unheard of. This was unthinkable, but Jesus said it, so it must be true. Jesus said it because He is God, and He is man all wrapped up in one. He knows the future. He knows the plan of the Father. He is working in accordance with the plan of the Father along with the Holy Spirit. So, He gives this prophecy and this prediction, which is the destruction of the temple in AD 70 by the hands of the Romans. We know that by reading secular history.

But that leads us to the second point Jesus makes, and that comes on the heels of the fearful anticipation in verses 3 through 5. *“As [they] sat on the Mount of Olives,”* that's where they were heading, *“opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew,”* the inner circle plus Andrew, *“asked him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?’”* You can understand they're fearfully anticipating

when this is going to happen because they don't want to be there when it does, and they also want to understand why God would do this to the temple. So, they're asking for an explanation as they call Him *“Teacher”* in verse 1, and so Jesus assumes the position of a teacher. He sits down on the Mount of Olives, which was three hundred feet above Jerusalem where they could see down into the temple. Some people even say that from the Mount of Olives you could see down almost into the inner sanctuary where the high priest would go, and they are imagining the devastation and what will be the sign of this. So, Jesus makes another statement in verse 5: *“And Jesus began to say to them, ‘See that no one leads you astray.’”* In other words, critical to understanding what Jesus says in this chapter is that there are a lot of deceivers and twisters of the events, the timing of the events, when they occur, why they occur, and all those sorts of things. A wonderful word for us today because many have botched the interpretation of Mark chapter 13. So, even what Jesus says in verse 5 applies to us today: *“See that no one leads you astray.”*

The supernatural prediction and the fearful anticipation, which leads to Jesus' point that there will be many deceivers, then took us, number three, to the crucial explanation in verse 6 through 8: Jesus says: *“Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet.”* Very key phrase there: *“the end is not yet.”* You will *“hear of wars and rumors of wars...but the end is not yet.”* Verse 8: *“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.”* The end of verse 7, *“the end is not yet,”* the end of verse 8, *“These are but the beginning of the birth pains,”* is all language metaphorically to describe that there is beginning the birth of the new covenant, which is going to come through travail or tribulation, judgment on Israel. And before that happens, you're going to *“hear of wars and rumors of wars,”* and there was a war. The Jews revolted against the Romans, which led to the destruction of the temple. That's what Jesus is speaking about. He's not speaking about some futuristic period before the second return of the Lord where there's going to be wars and rumors of wars. He's talking about what happened in the future of the apostles at the close of the 60s of the ADs. *“wars and rumors of wars...nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”*

There's going to be all sorts of turmoil. There's going to be not just geopolitical tribulation, but there's going to be what we call natural catastrophes, which really aren't natural. They're supernatural; God sends them, but we call them earthquakes, famines in various places, all of which took place around Rome in the 60s, the AD 60s: a famine in Rome, an earthquake in Laodicea, Pompeii, all over the place. These natural phenomenon, geopolitical tribulation, wars and rumors of wars, and Jesus says, *“These are but the beginning of the birth pains,”* This is the critical explanation. This is the beginning of the days of the new covenant, a sign that the old covenant has ended. That's what Jesus is saying. We're talking about events that happened in the future of the lives of the apostles in the early church, but events that occurred in our past. That's what you need to understand.

And the supernatural prediction, the fearful anticipation, the critical explanation then leads, number four, to the inevitable persecution in verses 9 through 13. And this is where we want to focus our attention this morning, on the fourth primary point that Jesus is making, which is simply this; there's going to be inevitable, inescapable persecution. To who? True believers. To who? The apostles. To who? The early church. So that many of the signs that the world would generally

experience—the geopolitical wars, the natural phenomena of earthquakes and famines—the apostles, in particular, are going to especially experience the signs of persecution. And there are two types: in verses 9 through 11, governmental persecution; in verses 12 and 13, familial persecution. The first persecution by the magistrates, those outside of the home; and second, persecution by the family, those inside the home. There’s no escape. Inside and out, the apostles will be martyrs. The early church will be sought to be destroyed by both Jewish and Roman authorities. That’s what Jesus says. And He begins to describe the inevitable persecution by talking about the governmental persecution in verses 9 through 11. Notice verse 9:

But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

And if I didn’t tell you where I was reading this from, you might think that I was reading from the Book of Acts, the history of the early church because the Book of Acts describes these sorts of events; the persecution of the early church and the apostles, the spread of the gospel, and the duty of the apostles to stand before magistrates and religious authorities to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus. These verses therefore describe the predictive sign of the coming judgment on Israel in AD 70, and the sign of that is the arraignment of the apostles before powerful people, councils, synagogues, rulers, governors, kings. “*But be on your guard,*” Jesus says, “*for they will deliver you over to councils.*” There’s no escape. “Councils” refers to local Jewish courts in the synagogues, which then lead to a sentencing, which sends you to the highest of all Jewish courts, the Sanhedrin where the Jews carried out detailed orders. Sometimes you would be beaten even before you got to the Sanhedrin. You’d be beaten by—get this—the servant of the synagogue. The attendant would do the beating. Three judges present. One judge would recite a passage of Scripture appropriate to the occasion of the charges, usually from the Book of Deuteronomy because that gives regulations and punishments for broken regulations. The second judge would count the blows of beatings, and then a third judge would issue a command in between each blow. That was a beating that you received in the local synagogues if you were a Christian, and Jesus says, “*But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils.*” “*For they will deliver you over...and you will be beaten in synagogues.*”

Acts 4 tells us that Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 4. We also know that Paul before his conversion—he was known as Saul of Tarsus—he participated in those beatings, beating other Christians. He says, Acts 22:19, reports Paul, “*That in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in [Christ].*” Ironically, later Paul would be one of those beaten by the same people he helped beat other Christians. Second Corinthians 11:24: “*Five times,*” Paul says, “*I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.*” Paul himself stood before at least five Jewish courts and was beaten. Jesus predicted that. Additionally, Jesus predicts the apostles would stand “*before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them.*” Governors would include men such as Pontius Pilate, Felix, Festus. Kings would include people like Herod Agrippa I, Herod Agrippa II. We read about them in Acts 12, Acts 25. Even Herod Antipas. Although he wasn’t a king in the technical sense of the term, he called himself a king, and Jesus is predicting evil men like this would kill the apostles. Pilate, of course, that

governor sentenced Jesus to death. Herod Agrippa I killed James, the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, one of the apostles. We read about that in Acts 12.

Paul himself stood before Herod Agrippa II. He stood before Festus. He gave wonderful speeches and testimonies of the gospel, for example, before Felix. In fact, you might even remember those words before Agrippa. Paul is standing before Agrippa, and Agrippa said to Paul, *“In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?”* In other words, Paul is trying to convince him to come to know Christ. *“And Paul said, ‘Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I.’”* Paul desired for Agrippa to come to know Christ. He bore witness about Christ just as Jesus predicts here. Paul also had the opportunity to witness to those of Caesar’s household, and he didn’t back down. We read about that in the Book of Philippians that some of Caesar’s own household came to a knowledge of the faith. Again, Jesus predicts the apostles would bear witness before governors and kings, and Paul certainly did that. Peter and John did that. All the apostles did that, and central to their apostolic message when they stood before these authorities to be sentenced and beaten was that, *“We have a higher King than you. His name is Jesus. He’s been raised from the dead, and He sits at the right hand of God.”*

They were killed for believing in the resurrection, for believing in the ascension of Christ, for believing in a King that was above them. Jesus predicts this will happen. This is going to occur. They became martyrs, right? That’s an English word *martyr*. It’s derived from the Greek term *martyrion* which means “a witness.” Martyrs are witnesses of Christ, His authority, His gospel, and John would later write about this in the book of Revelation. *“I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom.”* “I write to you on Patmos.” John says, *“[I am a] partner in tribulation.”* John was an apostle, fulfilling the prediction of Jesus here that he would be a partner in tribulation for the kingdom. And the message to the church in Smyrna is this; the *“first and the last, [the one] who died and came to life,”* says this: *“I know your tribulation.”* This is a church of the first century, and Jesus says, *“I know your tribulation.”* “How do I know it? I predicted it.”

(But you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Jesus is predicting what is fulfilled here in Revelation 1, the churches of Asia Minor being persecuted, led by the apostles, these Christians being persecuted. And what does the Book of Acts summarize the impact of Christianity in the first century? It says they *“turned the world upside down.”* The tribulation Jesus speaks about and the signs that Jesus speaks about occurred in the first century when the apostles stood with other Christians whose names we don’t even know, some of them, before these powerful people. They were beaten and sentenced by governmental authorities, and they were buoyed or sustained because they preached the gospel, and it was spreading. Notice verse 10, Jesus predicts: *“And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.”* Well, that’s the very reason they were arraigned before governors and kings because the gospel was having such an impact, it was spreading to all the people groups in Rome because Rome was full of the world, people of every ethnic stripe. The gospel was spreading. You remember Jesus was first sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He said that, and He even at

one point in his ministry forbid the disciples from going to the villages of gentiles, but that was because Jesus was a Jew, He was a descendant of Abraham, and so it was natural for Him to minister the good news first to the nation of Israel. But along the way, He showed tremendous love and grace to the gentiles because He was aware of the promise to Abraham that through Abraham, through his family, Abraham’s family would be a blessing to the world; or to borrow the language of Genesis 18:18: *“Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”* That was literally fulfilled in the first century.

The gospel was first proclaimed to all the nations. This is what the Old Testament predicted. The gospel was never meant to be isolated to ethnic Israel. They may have thought that, but they were wrong. If they would have listened to their prophets, the Word of God, they would have known. *“The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations,”* Isaiah says, *“and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”* Isaiah is predicting all the nations shall see it. That partly occurred in the first century. Well, what about all the Psalms that the Jews sang? How did they miss that the gospel would go to the nations? Psalm 72:

*May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth!
May desert tribes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust!
May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts!
May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!*

Oh, well they did think that, but they thought that God was going to destroy all their enemies and make Israel the center of His plan. That wasn’t true. Jesus is the center of His plan until the message of Jesus would go to all the nations because we read in Ephesians 1, this is according to the definite plan and the purpose of God, the counsel of His will, Ephesians chapter 2 verses 11 and following that all of those *“strangers to the covenants of promise”* would be welcomed in. They would be grafted in. That’s why you have the Great Commission. Jesus says prior to His ascension, *“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel.”* So, verse 10, *“And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations,”* was the gospel preached by the apostles and the early church that spread in Rome, which was a segment of the world’s population.

But this leads us to an interpretive problem because many interpreters says that verse 10 should apply to the end of time because the gospel was not proclaimed to all nations, not in the sense of every continent and every nation. Well, you need to remember that the signs point—remember this—to the destruction of the temple in AD 70, and the one sign is persecution for preaching the gospel. The word used is *ethnoi*, which means “nations.” It also means “tribe” or “people group.” Rome had conquered many nations, many peoples, many tribes, so that in the first century, God’s people often spoke of Rome as “the world,” and I think that’s the way Jesus is using “nations” here in Mark chapter 13. For example, Paul says this: *“The hope laid up for [us] in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed [it*

has also come] in the whole world [and] it is bearing fruit and increasing.” Paul says in the first century when he writes to the Colossians that for all intents and purposes, the gospel has spread to the whole world. Why does he say that? Because he is talking about the known world in which Rome was a microcosm of that because it was made up of so many different nations and ethnic groups and people and tribes. Paul would even say this, and he said this actually before he stood trial. He said, *“But the Lord stood by me,”* at my trial. He *“strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth.”* Paul says, *“They didn’t put me in the arena and feed me to the lions. God was with me,”* and God’s purposes were that *“the message of the gospel might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.”* Again, a sort of encompassing term, *“all the gentiles,”* the whole world, all the nations. What is Paul referring to there in 2 Timothy 4:17? He’s talking about the known world. He’s speaking about the Mediterranean world, the Roman empire. And so, when Jesus says here in verse 10, because He’s been speaking about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem that was part of the Roman empire, when He says in verse 10: *“And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations,”* He’s speaking about the known world of that time.

The gospel would be preached, and it would extend to all nations and ethnic groups; a monumental task of these apostles faithfully preaching, and they did it. But notice how they did it, verse 11: *“And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.”* This wasn’t an enterprise done in the flesh, was it? It was done in the power of the Holy Spirit that the gospel literally turned the known world upside down, and the gospel was reaching people other than Jews, scores and scores over, all sorts of different type of people. It was the Holy Spirit that did this. A good reminder to us today that if there’s going to be any sort of reformation or revival, it will be the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the gospel. It’s not the government that needs reformed. It’s not the public education school system that needs reformed. It’s the church that preaches the gospel that will change hearts that will then slowly, like leaven, reform society. And by the way, that was Luther’s view during the Reformation. Someone one time asked him, *“How did you do this hard work and this great enterprise of the Reformation?”* and Luther responded this way: *“I did nothing. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I went to sleep or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the world so greatly weakened the papacy,”* that is, the Roman Catholic church, *“that no emperor ever inflicted such great losses upon the spread of the Word of God.”*

In other words, Luther says, *“I preached, I wrote, I taught the Scriptures, then I went to bed. I woke up. I drank beer with my friends. God did all the rest.”* In other words, God did everything, and there wasn’t an emperor or a governor or a king or any sort of religious official that could undo the Reformation. They tried it. It’s called the Counter-Reformation, and they countered it, but it wasn’t successful. Look at the world today, the growth of Protestantism. But Jesus is saying in verse 11, the power was in the Holy Spirit to give them the words to say when they stood before governors and kings, these apostles. This doesn’t mean the apostles had blank minds or were hasty, as if in some mechanical sense, God took over their bodies in some sort of hypnotic state. No, they were actively participants. Paul stood before high officials, and he gave the gospel, and he was active in that. Nor were the apostles in their boldness to preach and to write these epistles that we read in the New Testament, the result of the Holy Spirit suppressing their personalities, or the apostles somehow ignoring all the training of three and a half years they received with Jesus, they

didn't apply it because the Holy Spirit just took over. That's charismatic, Pentecostal teaching. The idea that all you need is you and your Bible, and you can just open it up and speak the words of God, and you don't need an education, and you don't need to study, the Holy Spirit just does it all—that's a perversion of what verse 11 is teaching, simply saying that the Holy Spirit's going to sustain His people under times of persecution, specifically leaders of the church, and in particular, during the first century with the apostles so the gospel could spread, so the gospel could win the world for Christ.

Remember that Jesus said He was going to send the Holy Spirit, right? The apostles are worried. What are we going to do without you? What are we going to do when you are gone? Jesus says, *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”* But it's not as if when Mark wrote his gospel that he was in some sort of mechanical trance-like state. He had to put materials together and resources together, and he had to think, and he had to use the gifts God gave him, but the Holy Spirit called to his mind the things he needed to remember. And it's not as if the Holy Spirit wasn't active in the Old Testament. He was. It's just that in the new covenant, the Holy Spirit is going to be so active that the gospel is going to spread to the nations, and that began in the first century and it's continued since. Without question, the Holy Spirit empowered Peter and Paul supernaturally when they said things to the religious leaders, “You judge, should we obey you or obey God? Which is better? You can do whatever you want to us. We're not going to stop proclaiming the gospel.” The Holy Spirit is the one that sustained them.

And as I said, though Jesus' words were predicting a future time of signs by way of persecution of the apostles in the early church in the period leading up to AD 70, there's still the timeless principle that we can take from this that during great periods of reformation and revival in church history, there are often civil magistrates that try to suppress the spread of the gospel, so that we can apply 2 Timothy 3:12: *“All [those] who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* That is true. Verse 11 can apply to us in a general sense, but it was particularly true in the first century. It was also true in Luther's day, Calvin's day, Knox's day, all the Reformers, leaving civil magistrates fearful of preachers who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. And mostly poor peasants who made up their congregation, and yet still in some amazing way, the church spread, and the gospel spread. Gee, I wonder why? Maybe God is sovereign. Maybe when Jesus was resurrected, and He ascended to the right hand of God, He's actually ruling and reigning, not just over the church but over the world. Jesus predicts that. Don't be fearful of these governmental authoritarians. They cannot hurt you because they cannot prevent the spread of the gospel. That's what Jesus said to the apostles in the first century and is still true today.

But what's the larger point here? The larger point in verses 9 through 13 is this inevitable persecution, right? Two types: one, governmental persecution, verse 9 through 11; now a second type, we'll call this familial persecution or persecution by families. In verses 12 through 13, Jesus warns of the sad betrayal of family members for being disciples of Christ, and this will occur, Jesus says, just prior to the destruction of the temple. That's the context. Notice verse 12, and here's what else will happen, Jesus says. Here are more signs: *“And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.”* That last clause, *“have them put to death,”* likely means cause them to be put to death because they turn them into governmental officials, which is exactly what happened in the first century. A

person who unjustly causes someone to be put to death or sets them up to be put to death are just as guilty of violating the sixth commandment as someone who literally does it with their hands.

You go back to the Old Testament for an example of this. David, he showed his stealth yet sinfulness in setting up the murder of Uriah the Hittite, sending him, as the Bible says, to the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then having the other troops ordered to draw back from him, causing him to be struck down and die. And when Nathan confronted David, he said the charge in a way that made it look like David had used his own hands to slay Uriah. Nathan says, *“You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and [you] have taken his wife to be your wife and [you] have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.”* It was the Ammonite soldiers that killed him, but Nathan says *“For all intents and purposes, you violated the sixth commandment. You murdered him.”* Or even Herod. Herod said, *“John [the Baptist], whom I beheaded.”* Herod didn’t behead him. Someone who had a sword that he commanded to do it, and Herod didn’t really want to. It was his evil wife, Herodias. It was her daughter that made the request, and yet the Bible says and even Herod knew, *“I was the one who killed John.”*

But here in verse 12, as unthinkable as it sounds, Jesus says that one of the signs of the coming destruction of the temple will be this familial persecution through betrayal. What does verse 12 mean? *“And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.”* Here’s what it means: a Christ-hating son betrays a Christ-loving brother, a Christ-hating father betrays a Christ-loving child, Christ-hating children rise up against their Christ-loving parents. They betray them. They turn them into the authorities, they’re arrested, they’re beaten, and some of them, as Jesus says at the end of verse 12 are *“put to death.”* Such shows how deep sin is and rebellion toward God, flowing through our veins to the point that sinful man turns against those who have the same family blood flowing in their veins to set them up for murder or execution for believing in Jesus. We have all three here. Fratricide—that’s a person who kills a sibling. Well, that happened early on, didn’t it? Cain slayed his brother Abel, Hebrews 11 says, because Abel *“offered a more acceptable sacrifice.”* We see that in verse 12. Filicide—also in verse 12, a person who kills their son or daughter. Very popular in our culture today with the legalized murder of babies. States now have the right to determine that—not the federal government, apparently, but I thought God had the right to determine who is put to death. Fratricide, filicide, parenticide—a person who kills their parents. You remember the Menendez brothers? There have been countless others throughout history. Jesus told the religious leaders, *“You are of your father the devil.”* *“He was a murderer from the beginning”* and so are you, and it was the Jewish officials who worked with Rome to put to death Christians, and the unbelieving members of the family would turn them in.

One of the gravest threats to the generational growth and the spread of the gospel—listen to this—is not the public school education system. It’s not pornography. It’s not the secular government. It’s not weak churches, bad as they are. It’s children rejecting the faith of their parents, betraying their parents. That was the great sin of Israel. Did you forget that Jesus is speaking about Jews who were supposed to be in covenant with God, who rejected their Messiah, and betrayed a family member because they didn’t believe the Messiah had come? They were faithless to the covenant. What does Micah say? He says, *“The son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”* That was true in Micah’s day. It was true in Jesus’ day, in the days of the

apostles. And so, you have this promise that when the days of the new covenant come, there will be this hope that that won't take place, but before that reformation of the family and the new covenant takes place, there's going to be the birth pains of tribulation.

What is it that actually defines a family anyway? It's a good question in today's world, isn't it? Everyone's asking it as if the Bible hasn't spoken to it, or as if it's not obvious and clear just through common sense. Malachi 2:14 tells us: *“But you say, ‘Why does he not?’”* Why does He not find favor? Why? Why is it that God no longer regards the offering or accepts with favor the fake tears of repentance? *“Because,”* Malachi says, *“the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”* *“By covenant.”* A marriage is a covenant. A family is a covenant. We see that in Genesis 2. Turn back with me to Genesis chapter 2. In verses 18 through 25, Moses writes, and he shows the family is defined by a covenant. My whole point in this is to show you that is why what happens in verse 12 with family members betraying one another is so serious. God views the family seriously. It's a covenant. This betrayal was a violation of the covenant of the family. What do we read here in verse 18? We read: *“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”* We'll stop right there.

First of all, we know this is a covenant because God is the author and Lord of the covenant. It's His decision to establish marriage. Adam didn't have a wife; God gave him one. God created him one. Well-meaning Christians say the family is the most important institution in society, and I would say to that, well what about the church and the state? Are they important too? The family may be the most basic institution, but it's not the most important institution. What's important is all of God's kingdom—the family, the church, and the state—and above all of those three institutions, the most important thing is God, His authority. This is His world. He determines how things are structured, and He has set up the family as the most basic of covenants. God established the covenant of marriage. Those in marriage, beginning with the wife and the children submit to the man who is the head, but the man is to submit to God. The man is only head of his family insofar as he submits to God. The family is not to be worshipped; God is to be worshipped. Just as the state is not to be worshipped, God is to be worshipped. Just as the church isn't to be worshipped, God is to be worshipped. He's the Lord of the covenant. He's to be put above the family. The family is derived by God. He's Lord of the family, Lord of the covenant of the family. He decided to bring Eve to Adam. Otherwise, the family becomes God above the true God, and we see that among pagans in our world today, don't we? Their children are the center of everything. They worship their children, and the wife loves the children more than she loves her husband. That's one end of the spectrum.

The other end is sacrificing children in the name of Molech, the secular and demonic religion of worshipping self and secularism, the other extreme, the secularized definition of love, which in our culture means you spoil your children. You make them the center of your universe. In our home early on, we decided that we would tell our children to their faces that dad loves mom more than he loves you, and that mom loves dad more than she loves you, and that we love each other more than we love you, and that we love God more than we love you. And yet that's strengthening the children, isn't it? Because they understand innately that's the way it should be. God's the Creator. They don't doubt the love that their parents have for them. They know the priorities. You see, God doesn't want us to subvert and pervert the family, and our culture has found every way

to do that. The wife loves her career and children over her husband. The husband loves his golf game more than his wife and kids. The children love themselves more than anything, and they all love the family dog above all. That’s the culture. It’s sort of ironic, isn’t it? Dog spelled backwards is God. He’s the one that’s supposed to be on top of the family. It’s an indictment on the family to turn things around so that the dog is now on top. That’s our culture.

I had a soccer player recently tell me—his mom was standing right there—how important the family dog was to him. I said, “Yeah, but you have to understand at least your mother loves you more than the dog,” and he just shook his head “no.” And I looked at the mom, and she confirmed what he said, and for some reason, I actually believe her. Crisis in the family. God is Lord of the family. He’s the author of marriage. He brought Eve to Adam. He’s the head of the covenant. You see, the New Testament gives a different perspective. A family is accountable, including the father to the local church, specifically the elders. And a father’s familial authority is checked and balanced by the elders because the elders and the father are supposed to be in submission to God, and yet even the church screws this up through perverted patriarchal protest against the authority of leaders in the church. Can you imagine if the father in 1 Corinthians 5, whose son by the way was having an illicit relationship with his wife, can you imagine that father telling the elders of the church and Paul, “You know what? I know my son shouldn’t have done this, but he’s my son. Don’t excommunicate him from the church.” If the elders would have listened to that, they would be in sin because the father is not the head of the covenant of the family; God is. The father is just the head of that specific unit, and the elders don’t have a right to overturn God’s authority to not kick out a man who’s in public unrepentant sin. This is because the apostles and elders rightly understood the family is a covenant under God. And by a family attaching themselves to the church, which is also in covenant with God, the elders by design and the father by design who all have authority don’t have authority over God. So, the family is not to be worshipped. Many well-meaning Christians do that, and they’re no different than secular people who worship the state. They’re taking one of the three institutions, and they’re placing it over God. It’s not family over God. It’s not the state over God. It’s not the church over God. It is God who is over all.

Here’s another feature in Genesis 2. I hope you’re still there. Not only is God author and Lord of the covenant, but number two, we see here that the revelation of the man as the head of the woman is to be the expectation in the marriage relationship. Verse 19: *“Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.”* So, the man has responsibility and headship and dominion over the creation before there is ever a woman. So, when she comes along, obviously, she’s going to be in submission to him. He’s been running the show. Verse 20:

The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

This is as if God is saying, “This is your husband.” Adam is beginning to fulfill the dominion mandate. That was found back in Genesis 1:26, “[to]have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air.” Here, he’s naming the animal kingdom. He’s trying to guard and keep the

garden, but the upkeep is too much, so God gives him a helper who he’s in charge of. She comes to him, and Adam recognizes equality in essence because he says in verse 23: *“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”* We’re equal, but she doesn’t have equality in role because *“she was taken out of man,”* verse 23, and she is called *“a helper”* in verse 18. So, Adam recognizes that he is the head of this marriage. By the way, in every covenant, there’s the structure of hierarchy. The leaders of the covenant represent God. In this case, Adam represents God. He’s an authority over Eve, but he’s not in authority over God. So, Eve submits to Adam, and in so doing, submits to God; and in a covenant of marriage, you have the same hierarchy. The man is the head of the home. And in the covenants in the Old Testament, when one leader dies, there is a successor. The covenant doesn’t die. There’s just someone that replaces the leader, such as Joshua replaces Moses.

So, the biblical covenant of marriage has male authority over the wife perpetually, but not over the children perpetually because there’s a third feature, and that is the man is commanded to uphold God’s commandments. Verse 23: *“Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman... she was taken out of [me].’”* This is Adam basically saying, “I recognize my responsibility. She has been taken out of me. God has given her to me. I must teach her this dominion principle of Genesis 1:26. She is to help me take dominion over the garden,” because there are ethics to every covenant. And the fact that she was taken from the man reminded her that Adam was created in the image of God. Therefore, she bore the image the God, but she was taken from the man. They both came from God, and they were to image God by being workers, by fulfilling the dominion mandate in the garden, and Adam was to teach her, and when they had children, they were to teach their children, just as Moses said in Deuteronomy 6. Remember that? Teach these things *“to your children...when you rise...when you lie down.”* You have a responsibility to *“teach them diligently,”* to talk of God’s Word *“when you sit in your house...when you walk by the way. Bind them as a sign on your hand...write them on the doorposts of your house.”* This is what God expects. Proverbs 2 speaks about the biblical wisdom of a son listening to his father.

You see, marriage is a covenant. You have all the parts of a covenant. You have ethics, you have hierarchy, you have God who established it. Fourth, here in Genesis, the mandate for the children of Adam and Eve to duplicate the family covenant by starting their own families. Verse 24: *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* By the way, Moses writes this, and it’s an editorial comment that he gives under inspiration of the Holy Spirit to show that all this talk about Adam and Eve is not just meant for Adam and Eve; it’s meant for every marriage. Marriage is always a covenant, and there’s this principle. It’s timeless from the sacred text that *“a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* Jesus adds an editorial comment to that in Mark 10:9: *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* There is even more that Jesus adds, but the point in this; the marriage is a covenant. You break it, you’ve violated the covenant. You break it, you’ve also violated your covenant with God. In fact, the language here in verse 24, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh,”* that’s legal terminology to describe the ending of one covenant; that is, the separation from one family covenantal unit to begin another one. You leave. It’s the Hebrew word *‘āzab*. It describes the termination of a covenant bond, and what’s the covenant being left? The covenant being left is the authority of the parents because the authority ends when

the child comes of age. The covenant doesn't end. The covenant marriage of the parents should continue, and the new covenant of this new family unit begins. But nevertheless, they leave.

“*A man shall leave his father and his mother,*” *‘āzab*, “*and hold fast.*” I like the translation “*cleaving,*” because there's leaving, *‘āzab*, and there's cleaving, *dāḥaq* to show this is a covenant. This is a covenantal bond, and why do they hold fast? They hold fast to fulfill Genesis 1:26. Part of the dominion mandate is to be fruitful and multiply; that God ends the covenant with their parents and to begin a new covenant in order to fulfill that mandate. So, there's leaving, *‘āzab*, cleaving, *dāḥaq*, and weaving. One-flesh union not just for the express purpose of sexual intimacy, but for procreation. So that the one-flesh union is not merely physical; it's covenantal, that a husband and a wife are covenanting before God in marriage, that they will fulfill the Lord of the covenant's mandate to be fruitful and multiply. And as Eve cleaved to Adam, bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh, as they produced children, they fulfilled the mandate. You see, a marriage ceremony is a covenant, and what you do in a marriage ceremony is sealing those oaths before—listen to this—the family, the church, and the state. The family sees these covenantal oaths being made, and they show their support of that by giving gifts and attending. The church is there because the minister represents the church, and the state is there witnessing this covenant ceremony because you have to have a marriage license to make it legal and legitimate, so that the new husband is the new covenant head of his house. It's not his father, and it's not his father-in-law who are the head of this new covenant, this new marriage. It's him. One of my favorite parts of a marriage ceremony is when the father places the hand of his daughter into the hand of the groom, as if to say, “She's out from under my authority. The covenant has ended. The covenant has ended. Now you're in charge. Don't mess it up.”

New family, new unit, which then leads to verse 25 in Genesis: “*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*” Here's the fifth little point Moses makes to show that the marriage union is covenantal. “*The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*” That seems odd, doesn't it? When you're naked you should be ashamed, right? Not pre-fall. When they were in perfect covenantal union with God, there was no judgment. There was no shame. There was no guilt. The Bible speaks this way to show the contrast with what happened in Genesis 3. They were guilty because of sin. Their shame of nakedness was a way for God to remind them of their loss of life and—listen to this—the death of their covenant with God, and in a real sense, a partial death to their covenant of marriage because now they couldn't even look at each other without being filled with shame. And what did that mean? It meant the death of their children. No future automatic inheritance of the garden. You're going to be kicked out of the garden. And their shame was only removed and overcome by the promise of another, right? In Genesis 3, after their sin, the promise of a second Adam who was prefigured by the animal skins that covered the shame and the sin and the guilt of their nakedness. So that that dominion mandate in Genesis 1, the first chapter of the first book of the Old Testament corresponds to the Great Commission, which is found in the first book of the New Testament in the last chapter where God's people are now clothed with the righteousness of the second Adam, and they are not—to borrow Paul's words—to be “*ashamed of the gospel*” but to proclaim the gospel.

Now, let me ask you, where do you begin to proclaim the gospel? You begin to proclaim it in the covenant of the family where you pass down gospel truths to your children because this is the way God designed it. Christ's coming as the second Adam is the promise the parents remind their

children of. However, children are not saved on the coattails of their parents’ faith. They may be part of the covenant, they may be part of the covenant family, but if they prove to be covenant breakers, they’re cut off and don’t receive the spiritual inheritance. Why am I saying all this? Because back to Mark 13:12, that’s exactly what happened. You could say that the very reason God judged ethnic Israel was because they broke the covenant. “Okay, I get that, but what covenant did they break?” The marriage covenant, the family covenant. The children rebelled against their parents, which was rebellion against God. The whole family structure broke apart. Therefore, the whole covenant broke apart, and the covenant died, and the covenant ended. And what is Jesus saying in Mark 13? He’s saying, “*Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.*” They’ll be persecuted leading to imprisonment, leading to beatings, even leading to death. Who are these people? They were Jewish children of Jewish parents in covenant with God. Breakdown of the family.

And this is why what Jesus says in verse 13 is so important. He says, “*And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*” In other words, there’s a new covenant. There’s a new covenant. You’re going to “*be hated by all for my name’s sake,*” but to the one Christ-professing, believing Jew who is persecuted by another Christ-hating family member, to that one who endures to the end, he or she “*will be saved.*” This was a huge issue because you had a lot of Jewish believers that were being rejected and cut off from their family and being betrayed. In fact, some commentators think—and I think they’re right—that the book of Hebrews was written to address this. Think about all the warning passages. Don’t become a covenant-breaker like people in your family. Don’t become a covenant-breaker like the Jews. You’ve believed in the gospel; continue to believe. But some didn’t. Some did, as verse 13 says, “*Endure*” in the covenant “*to the end,*” proving the sincerity of their faith in Jesus, and to them Jesus promises they “*will be saved.*” To some, they never recanted their faith, and they were made into human torches with a pole shoved up their backside and lit on fire to light up Nero’s gardens. There were some who fought in the arena and were fed to the lions. They kept their faith until the end.

So, in one sense, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church due to the faithfulness of the gospel being passed down. God preserved their faith during immense persecution in order for the church to grow, ironically, because of the atrocities that brought attention to Christians, and therefore, the faith grew, empowering even more Christians to stand firm. On the other hand, some compromised their faith in the face of persecution. That’s why Jesus says to “*the one who endures to the end will be saved.*” Implication? There will be some that won’t endure to the end, and they won’t be saved, which means there are some that are part of—listen to this—the new covenant. They’ve been baptized. They’re members of the church. They’re on the church roll. They’ve heard the gospel, but they break the covenant, and therefore, they are excommunicated. They are rejected, just like ethnic Israel. They’re judged. Jesus provides no assurance of salvation for one who does not continue in the covenant. It’s not because it’s dependent upon us. The Spirit of God preserves our faith, right? But the Spirit of God will do that to true believers. What does Paul say? Just to quote one little part of Hebrews because I mentioned it, the author of Hebrews—we don’t know if it’s Paul, some think it was—but he says in verse 29, the author:

How much [more] punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified,

and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This is written to those in the new covenant church, who may fall into the hands of a fearful God in judgment because they violate the covenant, because they trample underfoot the Son of God by profaning the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified. How are they sanctified? Well, they were part of a believing family. They were part of an orthodox church, and yet they rejected that. It’s the same thing Paul said in Romans 11 when he said that Jews were cut off the tree, and wild olive branches were grafted in, but then Paul turns around and says, “Don’t become arrogant, you believing gentile branches. If you don’t continue in the covenant, God will chop you off as well.” Severe, severe warning, so that in some ways the reason God judged Israel, as I said, in AD 70, ending the old covenant so that gentiles could be grafted in was because they failed. They failed to raise godly offspring, and it got so bad that when the Messiah came, they rejected Him. And when their children believed in Him, they turned their children in, and when their parents believed in Him, these unbelieving children turned the parents in. It was absolutely catastrophic, and such was taking place in Israel and had been for quite some time, as I had read from Malachi chapter 2. But you say why does He do this? *“Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”* They broke covenant and were judged.

So, pulling all of this together, what Jesus is describing really in verses 9 through 11 are events that Christians, particularly the apostles and the early church, will experience: persecution by the government magistrates outside of the home, persecution by the family. Those persecutors, Nero, Jewish leaders would hate these Christians. However, I would also say that although this applies to something in the past, it can apply to the present in this sense. When you study church history, you see that when God is doing something in the world through the gospel to spark reformation and revival, it always comes by great cost, usually at the hands of governmental officials who persecute the true church, and yes, by family who turn in their loved ones. That’s exactly, by the way, how the apostle John opens his letter.

We’ll close with this. Turn over with me to Romans chapter 2. You’re familiar with it. Jesus says in verse 13, *“You will be hated by all for my name’s sake,”* Mark 13:13. *“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”* Jesus says that to Christians in the first century. John is speaking to the same Christians, and he writes to these seven churches, and what does he say in these messages? Well, for example, chapter 2 verse 7, the church in Ephesus: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”* That’s one who endures to the end, one who conquers; or chapter 2 and verse 11, his message to the church in Smyrna: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.”* Or the message to the church of Pergamum, verse 17: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”* He’s speaking about those who endure to the end. Chapter 2, verse 26, to the church in Thyatira: *“The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.”* Chapter 3 verse 5, a message to Sardis, the members there: *“The*

one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.” Chapter 3 verse 12, to the Christians in Philadelphia: “The one who conquers,” overcomes, “I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.” In verse 21 of chapter 3, the message to the Christians in Laodicea: “The one who conquers,” there it is again, “I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

Do you get the pattern here? John’s message to the churches in the first century: conquer, conquer, conquer, conquer, conquer, conquer, and when you come to the end of it, the reason is by the words of Christ, “conquer because I have conquered,” Jesus says. True Christians conquer the world for Christ. They fulfill the dominion mandate by fulfilling the Great Commission, by proclaiming the gospel to all the nations. They’re not ashamed of the gospel because they’ve been clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and they begin in the home, perpetuating the gospel, passing it down generationally so that the words that God made to Abraham will be fulfilled, that in Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed. That’s God’s plan for the gospel to overtake the world. But Jesus says here in this passage in the first century, there’s going to be child pains. There’s going to be this great tribulation. There’s going to be the destruction of Jerusalem, which will lead to the growth of the gospel, but then generations after that have to build upon that. This is a new epoch. It’s a new era. It’s a new covenant in church history. Christ has been enthroned, and we’re called to conquer, not violate the covenants, but to conquer as we proclaim the gospel generationally as a church, generationally as family.

So, there’s practical application for us today, even though what Jesus says is true with respect to the first century because the first century was just the beginning of the new covenant and there’s much work God intends to do in the world today, and He does it through the church as agents and ministers and ambassadors of the gospel, no matter what persecution comes, no matter what betrayal comes. We are to follow the apostles in the early church. Pray for reformation, pray for revival, and pray that the gospel reaches every corner of the globe because it is doing that, and Christ has conquered, and now He calls us to conquer through the gospel. Next week, we’ll pick up in verse 14 of Mark 13, and we’ll begin to see things get very interesting. Until then, let us pray.

Our Lord and our God, thank You for Your Word. Thank you for the power of Your Word, Lord, to remind us of simple truths we often forget, but Lord, to do so in a way in which we can study a text that was predictive of events in the future lives of the apostles, events which are in our past, yet events which convey timeless principles regarding the importance of marriage being a covenant, the family being a covenant, the reality of persecution from governments, civil magistrates, and our responsibility to fight for religious liberty, to fight for the spread and the proclamation of the gospel, unhindered, unflinchingly, regardless of the cost, knowing that Christ has risen. That was the testimony of the apostles when they stood before governors and kings. It’s Christ has risen. “We’re not afraid of you because Christ has risen.” He is king overall. Help us to believe that in our moments of weakness. Help us to pray for reformation, even as we celebrate the Reformation today. May a new reformation come on the heels of Your Word and the power of the gospel and the power of Your Holy Spirit. We pray and ask all of this in Jesus’ name. Amen.