

The Beginning of Sorrows (Part 2)

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[0:00] The passage, the key passage in the New Testament that we're looking at, I found in Matthew 24-25, as we get back into our study, just reminding you so that next time you hear a preacher or teacher or you read in a book, someone referring to the Olivet Discourse, you'll know, well, I know what that is.

That's Matthew 24-25. And as I've explained, that name, Olivet Discourse, is called that because of where it took place on the Mount of Olives.

And this discourse of our Lord Jesus Christ, I mean, he's the one speaking here, of course. You'll notice in your Bibles, if you have a red letter edition, it's all in red there.

So it's quite lengthy, a lengthy discourse. In fact, the longest answer to any question in the Bible. And I really believe, though, pretty sure about this, it's the longest discourse of Jesus recorded in Scripture.

And so, very, very important. And it is, of course, his response to a question. A question coming from his disciples.

[1:38] Specifically, though Matthew doesn't tell us this, Mark does. Mark 13 tells us that it was actually Peter, James, John, and Andrew who apparently came to Jesus either privately or in behalf of the other disciples.

Certainly in behalf of the other disciples. Whether or not the other disciples were actually listening is a little unclear, but I believe that we could assume that.

That Jesus gave the answer to these questions, really a two-part question. Gave it to all of his disciples, his apostles. And so, Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask the question.

One of them did. I imagine probably Peter asked the question. He's the bold one among the bunch. And so, verse 3 gives us the question.

Tell us, when will these things be? And by the way, we might be thinking that that is just simply a question connected to something Jesus said in the previous verse as the disciples were looking at the temple.

[2:48] He said, not one stone be left upon another. It's not just simply a question about that thing that he said. It's a question about a lot of things that Jesus said and taught within that week, that last week before his death.

As well as, I'm sure, other things that were on the apostles' minds. And so, they say, tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

So, it's really not three questions, two questions, really. Two-part question. When and what? When and what? Basically, that's what we have. A question about when and a question about what.

All right. So, Jesus answers their questions. Answers both of them. Sort of. Sort of. And I say sort of because of his answer to, really, the first question.

Because, you remember, I pointed this out, that Jesus answers the what question first. And then the when question. So, he answers the second question. And then comes back and answers the first question.

[4:02] And he doesn't really answer the when question until we get to verse 36 of this chapter, chapter 24. Where he says, but of that day and hour.

That's the when question. But of that day and hour, no one knows. That's why I said he answers their questions, sort of. No one knows, he says. Not even the angels of heaven.

But my father only. And, of course, that begs the question, does Jesus still not know? Well, he knows now. Of course. But in a sense, in a divine sense, and it's difficult to explain that Jesus would not have that knowledge.

That gets us all into a real quagmire of speculation and trying to understand how is it possible Jesus could not know anything.

I mean, he is God. And so, I'm going to just defer on that problem for our study here. But he certainly knows now when he is going to return.

[5:13] When all these things are going to take place. All right. So, he answers the what question first, then the when question. And so, we have here a pretty lengthy answer to this first part of their question.

Actually, most of chapter 24, really chapters 24 and 25, are primarily engaged in answering the what question.

And then, he does, of course, as I've said, answer the when question in a way. All right.

So, another thing that we need to understand, and not that everyone would agree with me on this, but this answer to the disciples' question about when is actually going to transport the disciples into the distant future, quite distant future for them.

And to a time that, for them, had not yet come and did not come during their lifetime. None of them would experience the things, especially those things we're about to talk about here tonight.

[6:31] The signs, the birth pangs that Jesus mentions here that will lead up to the end. They're not going to experience any of those.

And I'll go a step further. This is a time, according to my understanding of Scripture, my eschatology, a time that no believer in this present age will experience.

All these things will take place after the church has been raptured out of this world. Okay. So, again, kind of reviewing just a little bit to bring us up to speed.

As we discussed last week, Jesus gives the disciples a rather lengthy answer to the what question and the first part of his answer comes in the form of, I guess we could call these prophecies or predictions, you know, of predictions concerning certain events that are going to take place first.

We could call them signs. And really that would be appropriate because that's what the disciples actually requested. Remember the question, what will the sign, the sign of your coming be?

[7:53] What will it be? And of the end of the age, sign. And that's a word, by the way, in the Greek language that appears quite a lot, quite often in the New Testament, both in the Gospels as well as in many of the letters.

It's the Greek word semeon. By the way, if you're looking at your notes trying to figure out when am I going to fill in the first blank, you have a little while yet, so don't get nervous, okay?

I know how some of you are, you know. If you miss getting that word to put in the blank, it just destroys you for the rest of the evening. You know, you do. So I don't want you to feel that way.

This is all still introduction, okay? All right, so sign. Semeon is the Greek word, and it really means a distinguishing mark for something.

That would be a pretty good lexical or dictionary definition, a distinguishing mark. I mean, we use the word sign today, and sign, of course, is the English word.

[9:05] That's how it's translated a number of places in the New Testament. A sign is a distinguishing mark or sign or, you know, something that distinguishes something, tells you about something.

Maybe you're driving down the highway and, you know, you're not sure exactly what street to turn on. Like a few nights ago, Sherry and I were headed out to a little Christmas party out at the Collins, and I had my GPS, you know, on my phone, and it was absolutely wrong, totally wrong.

And it says, again, you know, a thousand feet, turn right, and so it's nighttime, and I'm looking for, you know, and I see a sign up ahead, and that's a mark.

It tells me I'm supposed to, this is the street, they say, now, in my case, it was the wrong street.

Google had it all wrong. Eventually, I had to call Robbie and say, you know, I've been to your house before, but it's nighttime.

I don't remember how to get there. And he said, where are you? And I said, I don't have any idea. Did so I could throw water somewhere, huh? No, actually, I did. We kind of stopped at an intersection.

[10:13] I could see the street we were on. And he said, oh, you turned on the wrong street, you're supposed to go down another mile to the next street. And so we do that, and we're looking for that next sign, you know, for the street.

So that's what a sign is. And in a, you know, in a much broader way, broader sense, this word semeon can mean that. Not necessarily a physical sign you look at that tells you what's coming or marks something, you know, like a sign on a building or something like that.

But it's often used in the New Testament to denote an unusual occurrence, the sign of something unusual. Something unusual.

Or something, quite often, to refer to something that transcends nature itself. And so that's why, by the way, though you wouldn't necessarily know it because you're reading the English text, that the word semeon is often translated miracle in the New Testament.

A miracle. And, you know, like all words in any language, you know, we all have a certain connotation that we attach to words.

[11:28] And so quite often, you know, and today we have some aberrant theologies that are based upon an understanding of an English word, the English word miracle.

And so you'll find the word miracle a number of times in the Gospels particularly. And then references to the life of Christ. But the emphasis is not on what was done, but what it points to. What it points to. So the fact that Jesus, you know, healed a blind man. The point is not so much that he healed a man who was blind.

The point was that he healed a man to prove who he was, to point to who Jesus really is and to validate not only his person, but also his message.

So we really ought to think of the word semeon as a something that points to, makes a distinguishing mark, not necessarily a miracle in, because it's not always a miracle or something that transcends nature.

[12:34] But it is quite often something a little unusual. And the focus is not on the thing that's unusual, but what it points to, what it points to. And I'm really going way further than I need to.

And so what we have here, these signs are distinctive events. Jesus is talking about certain events that are going to occur.

They're going to take place on this earth sometime out in the future. And these events, and he's going to name basically six of them here, at least initially.

There'll be other things that he'll say in relation to signs of the end of the age. But these events are going to take place in rapid succession. And because you have a sudden, rapid occurrence of these things he's going to list, he's saying this is a sign to you that the end is near.

And as I mentioned last week, the substance of these signs that he mentions here in the passage, the substance of these signs are not unique. That is unique to, you know, to this age in which we are living.

[13:53] These things he's going to mention are not new things. They're not new in the sense of never before experienced. You're going to find that until we get toward the end of these signs he mentions, these things have been occurring all throughout the church age for the last several thousand, couple thousand years.

Which has also caused some people to back up and say, well, you know, maybe this is not future. Maybe this is all present. But it's not because the idea here is that these things that Jesus is going to tell them are going to happen before the end, before he comes.

They're going to happen rapidly. They're going to be unique in the sense of rapidity. They're going to be happening quickly. And in the terms of intensity, even though you can find and obviously identify, you know, the existence of famines and earthquakes all throughout the history of this world. Jesus is talking about things like that and other things that are going to be more intense. They're going to happen with intenseness and also inclusivity.

That is, it will encompass the scope of it will be a much larger area. In fact, it'll be worldwide. worldwide. And so there won't be any way for those who are alive to see these signs, won't be any way for them to, to deny that this is something different.

[15:38] I mean, even though we've always had famines or we've always had earthquakes and we've always had persecution or we've always had, even though those things have occurred over the history of time, there's something different about what's happening now.

different in how rapid these things are happening, how intense it is, and how all inclusive it is around the world.

And then again, by way of review, Jesus refers to these signs as the beginning of sorrows, verse eight. And that's how, of course, it's translated in the new King James and King James version.

And, uh, the Greek word, remember, uh, that's translated sorrows, uh, in those two translations, uh, is a word that means the, it refers to the agony of childbirth, child, uh, the birth pains that, that, uh, precede the actual coming of the child.

All right. So this, this, that's what the word means. And that, and that's why most translations, more modern translations will translate it that way. And of course, everyone knows, uh, especially mothers, that the pains of childbirth occur just before the child is born.

[17:00] All right. Before it's, they come before and they lead up to the coming, uh, in this case, the coming of the baby. All right.

Uh, and so Jesus uses, uh, this, uh, uh, metaphor of birth pains, uh, to refer to the events that will take place in rapid succession just before the return of Christ in the end of the age.

And, uh, by the way, it's, uh, I think a pretty effective metaphor, uh, for a number of reasons, uh, uh, it also helps us imagine how difficult life is going to be on this earth when these events begin to take place.

Now, uh, I'm looking around the room, only three ladies in the place, uh, so none of us guys have experienced this, but I think every woman will testify. I know my wife can, that, uh, how horrendous an experience, uh, and difficult and painful, uh, uh, uh, an experience are birth pains, um, uh, you know, contractions, all of that that takes place before the child is born.

And so this is a very effective metaphor. In a sense, helps us understand that these times Jesus is pointing to, times that are going to come upon this earth, just prior to his return, are going to be difficult times, very difficult times, uh, painful times, unstoppable times as well.

[18:30] And that also fits with the metaphor of birth pains. There's no way to stop them until that baby comes. You can't just say, well, I'm not going to do this. Just forget it. I'm going home.

Uh, you know, ladies, you know, it, uh, it doesn't work that way. And, uh, so it's just a perfect metaphor, uh, that Jesus uses here.

And later Paul, when he writes to the, to the Thessalonians, he's going to use the same metaphor there, uh, uh, concerning the severity and intensity and frequency and the unstoppable nature, uh, of these events that would begin to unfold just before Jesus comes again.

All right. So what are these signs, these birth pangs? Well, uh, Jesus reveals six of them, six initial signs or birth pangs that will occur just before the end of the age, which of course is marked by, uh, his return.

All right. So let's look at it. Here's the first one. False Christs will deceive many. That's the first sign. False Christs.

[19:48] Now, verse, verses four and five, um, Jesus answers, answered and said to them, take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ and will deceive many, deceive many.

Now, we must admit that before the establishment of Christ's church, before the church was born, Jesus had to deal with many antichrists, uh, in his life.

Near, near, in fact, I would include, uh, nearly all of the Jewish leadership were antichrists, uh, in the purest sense. All right. So we know that Jesus had to deal with that even before the church was birthed.

And we know that the church age has always had to, deal with antichrists. Then and now, all throughout the time, this present evil age, is characterized by false Christs, or antichrists.

Uh, remember, uh, uh, what we've been studying out of first John on Sunday mornings. In first John 2:18, John writes, little children, it is the last hour or time.

[21:04] As you have heard that the antichrist is coming. And even now, many antichrists have come. They have come. And, uh, the implication is they have come and will continue to come.

Uh, because he says, by which, the fact that they have come, continue to come, it, it's by that that we know that it is the last hour. That we are in this last age, uh, this present evil age.

And so here is, in our passage, Jesus, uh, is warning those who will be alive during the tribulation. He's warning believers, uh, uh, who will be alive during the tribulation, who will be alive when these events that Jesus is predicting, forecasting, revealing, when they begin to unfold, uh, he is writing about this, uh, not for us per se, because, uh, I don't believe we'll be here.

Uh, but, uh, the Bible will still be here, uh, during the tribulation, uh, time, and, uh, people will be reading it during that time, and, uh, uh, many, as I'll mention a little bit later, uh, will be saved during the tribulation.

And he's writing this to warn them, uh, these believers, that the presence, the presence of antichrists will increase greatly.

[22 : 31] This is what he's saying. This is what the sign is. And with that, uh, the deception of antichrists will intensify to a level never before seen, never before, uh, experienced in this world, even though we've had antichrists all along.

Uh, uh, the, the sheer number of them, as well as their power to deceive, uh, and disrupt, uh, will be at a level never, never seen before.

That's what makes this a sign, makes it unique from, uh, similar things that have happened over the last couple of thousand years. Uh, all right, so, the great, and, by the way, the greatest of these deceivers, these antichrists, will eventually be revealed, the antichrist.

Um, the antichrist, I, I guess we could say the father and mother of all antichrists who will appear in the last days. Now, the antichrists who have appeared throughout the history of the church, history of the world, uh, of the church since the first coming of Christ, and the birth of the church, those antichrists who have come into the world, and are even, uh, in the world today, uh, in a sense, we could, we can say that they've been, to a point, held in check.

They've been held in check. That is, uh, what I mean is, their power to, to deceive has been limited. It's been limited, and, uh, certainly limited by comparison with what their success will one day be in the last days, uh, uh, before Christ returns.

[24 : 13] And so they've been held in check, uh, by, uh, Paul says, the restrainer. The restrainer. And, uh, in fact, it is the restrainer, uh, uh, uh, I believe, as I understand what Paul, uh, wrote to us in, uh, um, second Thessalonians, it's the restrainer that has kept Satan from introducing his antichrist into the world, uh, in the past couple thousand years.

What's kept him from doing that? Uh, it's been the restrainer. Uh, it's been the restrainer. Now, who is the restrainer? Well, in particular, it's the Holy Spirit.

Uh, the Holy Spirit. So, I, I think it's okay to, uh, capitalize restrainer there. But, in general, uh, it is the church, uh, I believe.

Not everybody agrees with that. I think it's the church, uh, you know, that is, of course, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Uh, and Paul wrote in, uh, second Thessalonians 2.6.

Now, I didn't put this in your notes. I had everything done, and I added this, so, uh, you can jot down some things if you want to. Uh, but Paul, uh, uh, wrote in, second Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 6, and this is right after he tells the, uh, his readers about the Antichrist, and the coming of that lawless one, that son of perdition.

[25 : 39] He says, and now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. He referenced to the Antichrist, that he may be revealed in his own time, the right time, for the mystery, or the hidden power, we could say, of lawlessness, lawlessness, is already at work.

And that, that, uh, you know, completely agrees with John saying, many Antichrists have come. So this, uh, this, uh, uh, mystery of lawlessness is already at work.

Uh, and we certainly know that, don't we? only he, this is a capital H, he, that's a reference to the Holy Spirit, he who now restrains, will do so until he is taken out of the way.

That's what, what he writes. Now, that's the Holy Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit is God, right? Second, uh, third person of the Trinity. He's God, and so therefore, he's omnipresent, right?

Uh, equally omnipresent with God the Son, God the Father. And so, we'd have to say that the Holy Spirit cannot be taken away from anywhere. He's omnipresent, he's, uh, you know, everywhere present, nowhere absent.

[26 : 57] I think that's the best definition of omnipresence. So you can't just take the Holy Spirit, uh, away, uh, because he's omnipresent. Uh, but, uh, the church in whom he dwells, the Holy Spirit, uh, dwells, and through whom he works, through the church he works, uh, the church can be taken away.

It can be taken away, and that, I believe, will take place at the rapture prior to the tribulation. And Paul goes on to say, and then the lawless one, that's, again, that's Antichrist, will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume.

So, the restrainers taken out of the way, I believe, it's a reference to the, rapture. Not that the Holy Spirit ceases to be omnipresent, but that is his restraining work and power through the church is taken away.

So this is the rapture. And Paul then goes on to say, and then, that is after that, the lawless one, the Antichrist, will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming.

I always like that. You know, not trying to be detailed historically, and say, well, this is going to happen, this, this, this, this. He's just skipping on ahead. The lawless one will be revealed.

[28 : 20] He will have some power for a time, and wreak some tremendous havoc upon this earth during the tribulation. But he will be consumed with the breath of his mouth, the Lord's mouth, and he will be destroyed with the brightness of his coming, the coming, the second coming of the Lord.

All right, so that's the first birth pang, and really going a little bit further than just simply the birth pang itself. Here's the second one.

something we're, we're not, you know, certainly have no knowledge of in our day, wars and rumors of wars.

I mean, we've, we've known that all throughout our lives, haven't we? Wars and rumors of wars. You can hardly argue that there is a single day where there is not some war going on somewhere. And if not a war, by definition of war, then certainly rumors of it, threats of it, possibility of it, breaking out at any moment.

[29 : 32] And so, this, this is not unique. And yet, Jesus says this is a sign, and so when you see this, then that's, that's the beginning of the end.

That's, that's a sign that the end of the age is coming, is soon. And so this must be something a little different. Verses six and seven, first part of seven anyway, and you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.

See that you are not troubled or frightened. For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

All right, so since these signs are analogous to birth pangs, that's the analogy that Jesus is using. If that, since that's the case, then these actual conflicts, wars, he's talking about actual wars, and rumors of conflict or wars, that these things will intensify to a level never before seen in world history.

intensify, not, not just simply in its intensity, but in its scope around this planet.

[30 : 56] And, and so Jesus, I think is describing a, in a sense, though, these conflicts may not all be connected initially, but eventually they will be connected in one major conflict.

I think that these are, this is a global conflict, global, such as the world has never seen. World wars one and two will pale in comparison to this future condition of war.

And, not, not a single person on this planet is going to be spared from, from these conflicts, these wars. and he says it will involve nations and kingdoms.

Nations, and, I won't be real dogmatic about this, but, some see a distinction this way, that nations is a reference to democratic forms of government, whereas kingdoms is more, more descriptive of those who have an autocratic form of government.

And, days, to be troubled.

[32 : 32] Actually, we could argue from scripture, other places, that, you know, he doesn't want us to be troubled either about the wars that are taking place and rumors of wars that are taking place in our world today.

Believers are not to be frightened, not to be troubled. But, he is specifically referring to those who, who will be alive way out in the future, still our future.

those who will be saved during the tribulation. And, when these things begin to happen, he doesn't want them to be troubled. And, and, so, why should they not be?

Because, when they hear and see these things taking place, they'll know that it's God's plan. You know, that's, that's one of the great things about the word of God.

you know, and, when we take the word of God and, apply it or connect it with things that are happening all around us. And, you know, with governments and wars and, and, and, you know, the, decline of morality, you know, wickedness and all this stuff.

[33 : 42] and, and we want to just kind of, you know, say, oh, what's happening? The world's going to hell in a handbasket. You know, that's what, you hear people say, well, but, we shouldn't be ignorant about that.

The Bible tells us this, these things are going to happen. And so, in the same way, Jesus is taking his disciples way out into the future and, and, and one day there will be people who will be living in

these times who will read what Jesus said and they should be comforted, certainly not frightened because they know when they see these things happening that this is God's plan.

This is God's plan. He said this would happen. And not only that, but they will also know that the end is near, which is a pretty exciting thing. The end is near, even though he says, but the end is not yet.

But the import of those words is that it's not yet, but it's soon. All right? So, now, ultimately, Antichrist will defeat the nations and kingdoms of this world and in the process, in, in the process, by the way, according to Revelation, destroy a third of this earth, this earth's population.

It would be a great conflict. And, and then after that, he will lead his forces that he's now in complete control over as the, the world leader of this planet.

[35 : 14] And, he will marshal all of his forces to the land of Israel. Israel, and he's going to try to prevent the returning of Christ to reclaim his rightful throne in Jerusalem.

But, his effort will be futile. That's good news. He's self-deceived. He thinks that he can somehow get a large enough army.

They could actually defeat the second person of the Trinity. They could actually defeat the Lord Jesus Christ. but, he can't. There's never even been questioned.

In fact, there's not even going to be any real skirmish. He will be, Christ will completely destroy him and his armies. And, you might jot down this reference if you want to look at it, you can.

But, Revelation 19. I didn't put this in your notes, did I? Revelation 19, 19 through 21. John writes, and I saw the beast.

[36 : 12] Who's that? Antichrist. It's the Antichrist. The kings of the earth and their armies, that would be the nations under Antichrist's rule, gathered, he saw, I saw them gathered together to make war against him, with a capital H, who sat on the white horse.

That's described, introduced earlier in the chapter. And, and who's that? Well, that's Jesus. All right, Jesus Christ. Called, earlier in the chapter, verse 11, called Faithful and True.

Faithful with a capital F and True with a capital T. Okay, so these are kind of titles. Faithful and True. And, against his army, who's that?

That would be us. The church, again, describing a little bit earlier in the chapter, those who are clothed in fine linen, white and clean. That's verse 14.

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image.

[37 : 23] That would be unbelievers. Those two were cast alive into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone, and the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

In fact, earlier in the chapter, he invites the birds to come and feast. And, these armies of the Antichrist will be completely, immediately destroyed in their carcasses there on the earth.

Birds will come and eat their flesh and so forth. So, that's the second birth pain. Third, famines and earthquakes. earthquakes. We have those today, don't we?

Still do. You know, we have a lot of earthquakes here in Oklahoma, too. Certainly not devastating, though they have caused some damage. But, there have been major earthquakes on this planet where thousands and thousands of lives have been lost.

certainly famine is a very real thing. I mean, we have recorded in Scripture times on this earth where great famines have taken place.

[38 : 39] Often times as instruments of God in judgment. Alright, so famines and earthquakes. Verse 7, the latter part of verse 7 and 8.

And, there will be famines, pestilences, that's added in the New King James and King James. It doesn't appear in some of the other translations. It does appear in parallel accounts, so it belongs there.

But, famines, pestilences, what's a pestilence? It's plagues. Alright. And, earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

There's that phrase referring to birth pangs. I mentioned Luke 21. Luke 21 is a parallel account. It adds a few additional items and there will be great earthquakes in various places and famines and pestilences and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

So, Jesus adds a few things there. At least, Luke recorded a few extra things that Jesus said that Matthew did not. And so, not only great afflictions on the earth but also apparently frightening signs

in the heavens.

[39 : 54] What are those things going to be? I don't know. comets you know things unexplainable happening in with celestial bodies in the skies in the universe.

Don't know. But these things are going to happen. Now, the phrase in various places usually is accompanied by the phrase at various times.

in various places at various times. But there is nothing about at various times which conveys the idea that these devastating frightening occurrences, these events, that they're going to occur simultaneously all around the world.

So, it's not that you hear today about an earthquake in such and such place, such and such country, and then we can go weeks and months before we hear about another one and, you know, maybe a comet or meteor, you know, they talk about comes close.

It's amazing how Hollywood has really helped us kind of visualize some of these things happening, you know, you know, big meteors that are going to totally destroy the country and so we send a rocket ship up there and they blow it up and, you know, all this fanciful stuff.

[41 : 17] But Bruce Willis can do anything he wants, you know, he just is able to do that kind of stuff. But we're not talking about occasionally here and there and, you know, I guess we could argue that there are earthquakes taking place every single moment on this planet, but that's not what we're talking about here, not what Jesus is talking about.

We're talking about devastating events. And not just one here and then there, but happening with intensity and also with greater intensity and frequency as we go along.

And so, verse 8 conveys the idea that there is more to come because all these things are the beginning of sorrows.

So, it's the same idea, by the way, that's found back in verse 6, but the end is not yet. So, a couple of times he mentions, these things are going to happen, but that doesn't mean it's the end.

It's not yet, but it's coming. These are the beginnings of sorrows, so there's more to come, and indeed there is. Here's the fourth birth pain, and the last one we'll look at tonight, I think.

[42 : 31] Yeah. And that is persecution of believers. And who could argue that we haven't had persecution, Christian persecution, all throughout this age in which we live.

It's a mark, a characteristic mark of this age, persecution of believers. Verse 9 says, then they will deliver you up, that means they'll arrest you, so this is an official arresting, these are officials arresting Christians, arrest you or deliver you up to tribulation, which probably is a reference to torture, or they'll arrest Christians, put them in jail, torture them, and kill you, murder you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

You could argue that this kind of thing is going on right now, not necessarily in our country, but certainly in many Muslim countries and others, and if it were not going on now, we wouldn't have VOM, would we?

so we know these things are happening, but this is something to a much larger degree. You know, Christians have been arrested, tortured, and murdered since the birth of the church.

I would even, there are those who argue there's more persecution now than ever before. But Jesus is obviously referring to a time of persecution unparalleled in the history of the church age.

[44 : 08] And by the way, good I think to mention this here, but he says there then you will be delivered up, or they will deliver you up, and kill you, and you will be hated, and so there's a question about who is you here?

who do you be? And it's the second person plural pronoun, you, but it does not refer, it can't refer to Jesus' immediate disciples.

Because all these, many of these things, all these things so far, happened in their lifetime, but Jesus did not return the second time in their lifetime. So we know that the you refers to someone out into the future.

And so why would Jesus, say, you, if he's talking about them, you know, way out there in the future?

Well, it's not unusual for Old Testament prophets, by the way, often addressed their prophecies to people living hundreds of years out into the future.

[45 : 23] And they would use the plural pronoun you. So this is very typical. now, so Jesus is addressing those who will be saved, as I've said, after the rapture of the church and during the tribulation, and which doesn't square with some theologies, eschatologies, and, but I say, yes, there

will be thousands and thousands saved after the rapture of the church.

The believing church is raptured and during the tribulation time. And I'll point to a couple of passages, Revelation 6, 9 to 11, when he, the Lord, opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held, meaning they were martyred for their faith in Christ.

But who are they? And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, how, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth, those who martyr us?

Then a white robe was given to each of them, and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was complete.

All right, so they were slain during the tribulation, and then John later was allowed to see these believers in Revelation 7, 9, a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

[47 : 24] And you skip on down to verse 13, then one of the elders answered, saying, to me, who are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from? And I said to him, sir, you know, and so he said to me, these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, that means they were martyred during the tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

So, I think clear reference to those who are saved. Earlier in that chapter, Revelation chapter 7, you have the anointing of 144,000, the selection of 144,000.

That's not those who are going to inherit the earth like the Jehovah's Witnesses want us to believe. But they're basically 144,000 evangelists who will, who are saved and they will share the gospel, and a numberless multitude of people will be saved, and, and, by the way, martyred.

Martyred because in both places there's not a reference here of them alive, but they've been martyred of great multitude that nobody can number.

All right, we're going to stop right there, and we'll see the remaining two birth pangs next week. I'll go ahead and give them to you. I may have them on your notes. The false professors of Christ will abandon the faith.

[48 : 51] May those who profess to be believers and they'll abandon the faith. And then the gospel preached to all the world, and so we'll get into that.