



## **Christ's Kingdom Forecast-Part 5**

### **The Unbreakable Promises**

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Well we have been studying the last few of our sessions together in a tremendous section of the Gospel of Luke. A prophetic section, a section where Jesus is talking about specific events relating to what is, from our vantage point, yet future. Some already fulfilled but most of what he's talked about in this section of Luke 21 has been yet future. Which by the way, I should point out that's only one of 318 other passages in the New Testament regarding the culmination of the age and the return of Christ and the fulfillment of the end of this world as we know it. 318, that's a lot, but it's not as many as the Old Testament. We have 1,845 passages that speak to the coming and consummation of the ages, which ends, of course, in the specific details with Christ returning to establish a kingdom.

Now just saying that with those almost 2,000+ references to the end of this world, it is a unique book that we study and it's hard to avoid, when you think about it in those terms, it's a book that's filled with these predictive statements about the future. Now not only do we study a book that every week, I hope, if you're paying attention and you're in this with us, you recognize it, not only diagnosis what's going on in our hearts right now, but it boldly predicts the future.

Now that wouldn't be of any consequence and hardly would catch your attention, I suppose, if it were written yesterday. Think this through now. If it were written yesterday it wouldn't really matter because you and I could write a book filled with prognostications about the future, it could be specific, it could speak of events tomorrow, next month, next year, 100 years from now, and, you know, no one really care about it. That is because we've had no time to see if any of those things actually would come true. The Bible's unique though in that regard, this book that we study and these words from Christ that we're studying is in a book that is filled with information that, from our vantage point, goes back 3,400 years when the first five books of the Bible started to be penned through a prophet named Moses, who was given this ability, we learn in Scripture, to not only tell people what is, but what will be.

And clearly we see God foretelling the future from 3,400 years ago. And because it wasn't written at one time, but the Bible continues, a library of 66 installments to this thing we call the Bible, and it stretches over 1,500 years until 90 A.D., mid 90s A.D., you've got now time to see a lot of these historical events actually come to fruition and be fulfilled. That's unique and it's very unique because you can't find any other book that does that kind of thing and gives us this clear evidence that God is a God who has punctuated his book by predictive prophecy.

Let me put it another way. The book that you hold in your hand or that's encoded there on your phone or your iPad, think this through, is about 25% predictive prophecy. 25% predictive prophecy. Now think this through. Of the 25%, about two thirds of the predicted prophecy in that 25% are about events that took place during that 1,500-year span, or actually from our perspective, the 3,400-year span from Moses writing the first five books until we come to today.

So you got two thirds fulfilled, which the intriguing part of course is that there's a third that's left to be fulfilled. Or in terms of the scope of your Bible about just under 10% of the Bible itself is still speaking of events that are yet to take place, over 2,000 references alone to the return of Christ.

That is a big and intriguing book. It's one that should really get our attention and get us thinking

about what it is that God has to say about the future. But, really it is all logically predicated on a few assumptions. Assumptions, such as, that God, if he's going to speak to the future, that number one, he's not lying to us. Number two, that he's faithful to do what he says. Even if he was sincere about what he said about what would happen in the future, is he going to carry that out? What happens if it's 100 years or a 1,000 years or 2,000 years later, is he still going to be faithful to keep those promises? And then, I guess, lastly and logically, we would ask the question: well, what about the factors that seem to be beyond the control of at least the person who is recording these prophecies. Could it be that God has the absolute power to make sure that these things actually happen? Is he lying, is he faithful, and is he powerful to succeed in doing what he says?

Now, I lay those things out because I think they're logical, but they're also the things that we find in a little transitional paragraph that we're going to study this morning, five verses in Luke Chapter 21. Now follow this: the first section of Chapter 21 gives us all these details about the return of Christ, most of them, from our vantage point, yet to be fulfilled. Next time we get together we're going to look at the very specific application that, if that's true, what are we supposed to do about it. And that will be a great study, I trust, next time we gather. But right between it is a little transitional paragraph that deals with these foundational issues. If the assumptions are to be, if we're presuming that God is a God who's not going to lie, he's going to be faithful, he's got power to succeed in carrying these things out, we can see these concepts embedded and flowing through these five verses. And they're rather shocking, really, if you think of Jesus as a mere man, if you think of Jesus as just a prophet, the way it's worded is quite shocking.

So let's look at it, let's understand it and let's realize that everything about your reaction to biblical prophecy is going to hinge on what we see in these five verses, really, logically, they should hinge on the things that we'll discover here today. So follow along with me. If you haven't turned there already, you'll do a lot better in this kind of message if you get your eyeballs on the text. Call up Luke Chapter 21 verses 29 through 33.

"And then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place,'" all the things he'd just talked about, verse 28, "you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.'" That's a big statement. It has a lot to do with building credibility for us as we read these words 2,000 years later and certainly for the original audience, as they sat there watching Jesus say these things to them, as they look across the Kidron Valley to the Temple Mount, the center of Judaism, all of the buzz of activity around the temple and all the discussion about what's going to take place, a lot of the bad news of what's going to take place, between the time he says these things until the coming of the kingdom. We've called this series the kingdom forecast, Christ's Kingdom Forecast. Well, in that forecast we've seen a lot of things. It ends well but really there are a lot of things in between that are really bad and a forecast that continues to get bleak and gloomy and darker the closer we get to the coming of the kingdom. And then as the kingdom is about to arrive, all these horrific things on the earth, as Matthew 24, the parallel passage says, things that are a kind of tribulation that hasn't taken place on the earth nor ever will there be. This is the worst of times that we see as a prelude to the redemption of Israel at the end of what we would call the Great Tribulation.

Let's understand this beginning with the parable of the tree or the trees. Let's try and see if we cannot, from the outset of this passage, see the connection to the last thing I said was the logical foundation of having any kind of respect for the predictive prophecies of Scripture, and that is that



God is able, that God has power, that God is in charge and able to carry out what he says. Now, here's how firm Jesus is about the things that he said. He said, basically the kingdom is coming but as a prelude to the kingdom, you got all these bad signs that are going to come, it's going to be great distress upon the world, great foreboding, a lot of people freaking out, the stars, the moon, all that's going to happen. He says these two things, the prelude, the signs before the coming of Christ and the actual coming of Christ, the redemption of Israel, the establishment of the kingdom, these two go together like the blossoming or blooming of the leaves on a tree before summer. When you see that you know that's coming as sure as night follows day. You know those two things go together.

And he says, the thing that you've experienced as a faithful succession of leaves coming on a tree and summer coming after it, that kind of hard connection between those two things, you can know that what I've just talked about, all these signs, certainly are going to precede the coming of the kingdom. It's as sure as your experience in nature and the trees in the field. That is a statement that is not only emphasizing what we're going to end with in verse 33, and that is the authority of his words, but it presumes the fact that God is one who just like, if we want to be technical, has encoded within the protein molecules of trees to know what to do and when to do it as it relates to the seasons, that there is a God who is actually orchestrating and is actually over and commanding and powerful enough to administrate the future events.

In other words, when we look at the prophecies of Scripture, the reason I can read them and walk away from them with a kind of confidence that they're going to happen is because I am to recognize, certainly from these words, this illustration and the rest of Scripture, that God is sovereign over future events. That's a biblical word for us to grapple with this morning. Jot it down if you would.

Number one, you and I should "Be Impressed with God's Sovereignty." Not just his sovereignty and being able to encode what trees should do before the summer comes, not only us being able to recognize, as he says elsewhere, that here are things in nature that are inextricably bound and you can read one about the future based on the present reality of another. We're not just talking about those things, but that kind of sovereign authority really goes in the future as it relates to a God who cannot just foresee the future but has authority over the future. And that sounds like a pretty complicated way to put it, let me clarify it very simply by turning you to the Old Testament book of Isaiah.

Let's look at a few passages here in the heart of the message of Isaiah to the people in Judea of the Old Testament. Let's turn to Isaiah Chapter 46. Call this text up, turn to this passage, Isaiah Chapter 46, and let me make it very clear, that God, the God who we claim is sovereign over the future, can break into time and space and tell his prophets, "Here's the reality. I want you to say this, I want you to record it," or have God incarnate himself stand on the Mount of Olives and say, "Here's what's going to take place. And here's the sequence, first this and then that."

That kind of inextricable connection, he says, you need to understand comes down to the fact that God is involved in all of human history as a sovereign, a potentate, one who is over all things. When I mean sovereign about the future, I don't mean he looks ahead to see what's going to happen, and then he says, "Hey, I've been there and back. I know what's going to take place." I certainly affirm God's omniscience, but I'm not talking about his omniscience, I'm talking about his sovereignty.

Let's illustrate that in the way that it's described in Isaiah Chapter 46 verse 8. The little illustration

in verse 11, we'll get to that. Let's start in verse 8. Now, I apologize that it's couched in a negative context. The context is they're about to go into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian armies. And so he's speaking to people who are disregarding the indicative statements of the prophets, which are, you shouldn't bow down to Baal, you shouldn't offer your kids in sacrifice to Molech, you shouldn't be playing fast and loose with your sexual ethics in Israel. You ought to be faithful to the precepts and indicative commands of God.

And he says, the reason you should know that is because God is sovereign over the future and has let your prophets know about things in the future. It is the sign of prophetic material that God can see the future and you should know that because the predictive statements of the prophets have always come true. And so he says to the transgressors, "Remember this and stand firm," verse 8, "recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God." That's that statement, I'm over things, I'm the powerful one, I'm the potentate, I'm in charge. "There is no other; I am God and there is none like me," the exclusivity of God's power and authority.

How do we know that? Well, because, like with most revelatory information, it comes punctuated with predictive prophecy. I said the estimate is about 25% of all of Scripture. "Declaring the end from the beginning." I told you what was going to take place here, and the end here, I suppose, is a relative term. It's not in the big scope of things. Clearly, he speaks of the end that we're reading about in Luke 21. But for them, the end right now in their life, was the end of this particular phase and chapter in Israel's history as they were about to be hauled away into the Babylonian captivity. And, you know what, he says, "No surprise. Because from the beginning I've seen those things, I've known those things, I orchestrate those things and I've let you know those things."

If you want to be specific here, Moses had said this from the very beginning, 1,440 B.C., he's penning Genesis through Deuteronomy, and in Deuteronomy we have the very clear prophetic word that God is going to bring Israel, not only into a promised land, but to have a king sit upon a throne and then have a succession to that kingdom all the way to a place till they bow down to idols and God hauls them off into captivity as prisoners. And then he even says, "If you repent, I'll bring you back to the land," all of that predicted. They've been reading this, they've been cutting their teeth in Sabbath school on reading those texts, and he says, "You should know that I've known the end from the beginning." I not only know it, I declare it "from ancient times things yet not done, saying..." I watched the tape and I know what's going to happen. No. "My counsel," look at that, my counsel, as I sat around and decided what to do. That's what sovereigns do, potentates do that, they sit down as a sovereign and decide how this is going to work out. "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all of my purpose." Now, I know you're going to throw a flag on that play. You're going to raise your hand and go, "What about all the bad stuff? I thought God was good, wouldn't he only plan good stuff." That's a different sermon and we've dealt with those things. Now, I understand that causes a problem when we ever define sovereignty the way the Bible defines sovereignty. I understand that is a difficult topic. We call it in theology the subheading "theodicy." A theodicy is trying to figure out in our theology how God retains his holy nature and yet utilizes evil in his plan for good. We recognize the evil has the immediate cause of rebellious agents, people like us or demons and Satan himself. And yet God says, in all of that tapestry, I work this together after my own counsel and plan so that I bring about something that at the end brings glory to me, even the bad stuff works out, to paint the picture that I wanted to paint. And so we see in the prophetic word of God, he lays out what's coming in the future because he is someone who's orchestrating this. I don't know how you define sovereignty, but you've got to look at it as more than being omniscient about the future. It's about God being the orchestrator, the administrator of the future. "My counsel shall stand, and I shall accomplish my purpose." Now notice, specifically, I talked about

Nebuchadnezzar being the real concern here, "calling a bird of prey." Here's the illustration. "A bird of prey from the east." Guess where Babylon was in relation to Israel, certainly. Right? To the east you've got this problem, this "bird of prey," this king. "The man of my counsel from a far away country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed and I will do it." Now here's what we learned about prophetic statements in the Bible. God will bring it to pass. It's not just that Jesus is looking ahead and saying, "Ah... I see in my crystal ball. This is what will take place."

God's got a plan and that plan is going to work its way out. And Jesus, the God-man, sits there on the Mount of Olives looking across at Jerusalem and he says, "here's how it's going to play out." It's going to play out this way because this is the council and command and the decreed will of the triune God. And he speaks with that sovereign authority, so much so that we end with the remarkable statement in verse 33, "My words won't pass away," because he is working out the future in detail. This is a God who has no problem with predictive prophecy. It is as easy for him to speak of the future and his plan being carried out and no hand can hold him back or thwart his counsel, because he's in charge of all things, and he does as he pleases with the authority, the sovereign authority, of heaven.

Turn back to Chapter 41, as long as we're in Isaiah, and take a look at how all of us would be wise to understand that the God of the Bible is unique in this. Demons and Satan himself cannot do what God does in terms of prognostication, if you'd like to call it that. That's not a word that we would want to apply to God, but anyone trying to say, here's what's going to happen, is going to have a hard time, a real hard time, being anywhere close to what God is doing as he works out the counsel of his own will in future events. No one else can do that. No one else can see it, they can only guess, they can predict, they might even say, tomorrow I'm going to build a tree house in my backyard and they can work at it, but all they can do is be against what they might have some influence on in terms of the reality of the future. But God himself, he doesn't have that limitation. And so he says, it would be foolish for you to put your trust in anything or anyone else who can't do this. God should be God, and that's the only person you should be bowing your knee to.

Isaiah 41, drop down to verse 21, Isaiah 41:21. He says, and again I hate to bring you this context, which is a bit of a, you know, a mocking of the false gods, but this is what God does. "Set forth your case, says the Lord; bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declared to us the things to come." He's taunting them. Why? Because there's no other god that can do this. Which, by the way, shouldn't be any surprise to you that every other religion, if you choose to walk away from biblical Christianity, you're walking into another religion that has none of this as its foundational corpus. There's nothing in the writings of Buddha. There's nothing in the Koran. There's nothing in the Book of Mormon that is going to give you anything close to the specific, exacting, predictive prophecies that God does. His fingerprints are all over the Bible in setting his book and his religion apart from all others.

Why? Because he's the only one who can do this. He'll taunt the gods of the universe, he'll taunt the demons of the world saying, "Hey, come tell us what's going to happen. You can only guess, you can only work to accomplish a few things, but I'm the sovereign one." "Tell us," he says, mockingly, verse 23, "what will come here after that we may know that you are gods;" Show us your power. You can't have sovereign control over the future. "Do harm," let's see that, "or do good," let's see that. Do some harm "that we can be dismayed or terrified. Behold you are nothing and your work is less than nothing; an abomination," now, he really starts to speak to us, "an abomination is he who chooses you."

I mean, who would turn their back on the real God who has real authority to affect the future? We should look at his revealing, pulling back the curtain of what's going to take place in the future and say, that's the only God who deserves my allegiance and my attention. And Christ, by the way, doesn't do what a lot of people do and that is say, "Hey, thus saith the Lord." He says, these are my words about the future. The God-man, Jesus Christ, these Christological overtones throughout this text are stunning. Christ says, "I say these things. The world itself can fall away but my words aren't going to fall away." And we have, again, this clear and strong statement of the sovereignty of God.

Chapter 44, as long as we're in Isaiah, one last look at something that should remind us of how I started this series, that all biblical prophecy is not intended to scare you. What did I say? It's intended to prepare you. That's the point. And so it is, even in this taunting section of Isaiah, as God is speaking to the people who are bowing down to Molech and Baal, he says, listen, verse 7, "Who's like me?" Isaiah 44:7. "Let him proclaim it, let him declare it, let him set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people." Let's see your predictive prophecies stretched over time. You can't do it. "Let them declare what is to come, what will happen." Okay, we've already seen that kind of taunting.

But look at this, verse 8. "Fear not," not to scare us, "nor be afraid. Have I not told you from of old and declared it?" Now I've said this from the beginning. The Great Tribulation, all these terrible events that are spelled out in Luke 21, are to prepare us. That's the point. Not to scare us. And here's God saying, "You're about to be hauled off into Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar is going to give this nation its punishment, that was not just in the last generation before Nebuchadnezzar came in, it was the preceding generations. Nevertheless, don't be afraid. I don't want you to be afraid. As a matter of fact, he doesn't go to Babylon. Walk through this. I'll help you. You walk through the river, I'll hold your hand. Walk through the fire, I'll be there. Trust me. Be like a rock. I'll be like a rock to you."

"You are my witnesses! There is no God beside me. There is no Rock;" verse 8 says, "I know not any." You got no one else to trust in. Trust in me, a rock. Not a rock in the garden but a rock like a fortress, like Petra, if you've been there in ancient Edom and in modern Jordan. "I will be your fortress and your protector." See, the whole point of biblical prophecy is not so that we stand back and say, "Well, God sure is powerful, look how providential and sovereign he is." Or, "Wow, I'm wowed by the specific, predictive prophecies of Scripture." The Bible is saying, here's what's going to take place, trust in me, come to me, take refuge in me, drawn nearer to me. I can be your protector because a lot of God's forecast, as we know, before the coming kingdom, is things are going to go from bad to worse. Impostures, they're going to increase, it's going to get only worse. And then there's going to be this horrific period of time before God spares and redeems the nation of Israel called the Great Tribulation. "But listen, all of these real dark forecasts that I've painted, it's not about scaring you, it's about preparing you, it's about getting your heart ready to open itself up to me." Now I'm grateful that God is so gracious that he's revealed these things and that so much of the Scripture tells us in detail about these things. And again, it's not like two thirds have not been fulfilled and one third has. Two thirds have and one third hasn't.

We have so much to go on here in God proving his faithfulness to us. Amos Chapter 3 verse 7 makes basically a statement in that regard. "How great it is that God does nothing without revealing his secrets to his servants the prophets." I'm grateful that we hold a prophetic book that tells us what is to come. The world doesn't look to it, they don't understand it, they don't agree with it.

You hold a book that's going to tell us the road map between now and the coming of the next world. We ought to take it seriously, which, by the way, you want to talk about God's love in doing that, John Chapter 15 has a nice New Testament parallel to that, he says to his disciples in John 15, "Listen, I don't call you guys servants, really I call you more than that. You're my friends. And you know why you're my friends? Because a master doesn't tell his servant what he's doing, but I'm your friend because I've told you everything. I've told you what the Father has revealed. Everything that the father has said, I've given it to you. I've given you the instructions, I've given you the forecast, I've given you the predicted prophecies." I mean, every time you pick up the Bible and you find about 10% of that Bible yet still unfulfilled predictive prophecy, you ought to lean back and smile in your study of the text, that God is giving you a loving forecast, even though it's a dark forecast, saying, "I love you. I'm telling you what's to come." "I tell my friends. I wouldn't tell my servants."

How unique we are to have a window into the future that God has sovereignly laid before us, that God not only sees the future but, as Ephesians 1 says in verse 11, He's "working all things out after the council of his own will." He's "made known the mystery of his will," and now he's "working everything out according to the council of his will." There's a great combo there starting in verse 9. He's told us these things about the future. Now he's working the future out. You ought to be impressed with God's sovereignty. Just like he's encoded the proteins in a tree to know what to do in terms of the seasons, so it is that he's programmed the future and he's working it out. We can bank on it as much as you'd bank on the trees budding being a sign that summer is near.

Well, verse 32 of Luke Chapter 21 should make this even more encouraging for us this morning. When he says, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place." Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Now this passage, this one verse, has given people a lot of headaches in trying to figure out what's happening here, what's going on. You have a few options here. Right? A few options in trying to take this word that's translated "generation," "Genea" which if you said it like an American you'd make that a hard "g" and you'd use the word "genea." You'd say it genea. You'd say it genea like we would say the word generation or genetics or genealogy.

But genea is the word that translates "generation." When you use the word generation, like we often do in our everyday discussion and sometimes it's used this way in the Bible, we think about this horizontal connection in time. If I say, "Hey, it's great to be in Orange County trying to reach our generation for Christ," I'm talking about the people who share this 21st century date on the timeline. We're all in this timeline.

Well that's one way the Bible uses the word. And then you have two options. If you look at a passage like this you say "truly this generation will not pass away till all has taken place," a lot of people would say, we must be talking about that generation, this generation, the generation that Jesus was speaking in, and that's the first generation. In other words, in the first century, in 30 or 33 A.D., Jesus says these things and he's saying, "None of the stuff that I've talked about is going to be delayed. In this generation it's going to happen."

And so, people walk away from this text and they say, "Well, this must be that all these things were fulfilled in the first century." And if you really take the entirety of this, we'll call you a Preterist, and that means everything that you see in the Olivet Discourse you think has already happened in 70 A.D. when the Romans came in and destroyed Jerusalem. And you'll look at the book of Revelation and the connections to the book of Revelation and you'll say everything from Chapter 6 to Chapter 19 has already taken place, or at least to Chapter 18, has already taken place. It's all been fulfilled.

Preterism. Preterism means it's all past. OK? That's one way to look at.

Other people say, "No, I'm a futurist." That means, I'm looking at this thinking I can't believe all these things have taken place because things like verse 27 speak of Christ coming on a cloud with power and great glory. I don't think that's happened yet. And if you say, I don't think that's happened yet, I think you're right. I don't think that's happened yet. And I think this great tribulation that's never been on the earth since that time or ever, I don't think we're talking about 70 A.D. and the battle for Jerusalem. I think you're right.

So then they'll say, well that horizontal definition of the word generation must not be the first century it must be whenever those end times things are going to happen. Oh yeah, sure, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., but there's going to be some other kind of destruction, there is going to be some other kind of terrible tribulation. There's going to be the signs and the stars and the moon and the sun. There's going to be distress on all the nations in great perplexity, as it says in the passage, foreboding that's coming upon the world. All that's future. So, we're going to say that generation, whether it's the 21st century generation or the 22nd century generation, maybe just out there, whenever. And then it's a statement that says, "Well, I know that that last generation is not going to pass away to all of this happens."

So that would be a statement of saying, well, tribulation is going to be bad, but not everyone is going to be dead. That generation is going to survive. Genea could be used that way or jenea as we would say it Anglicized, if we say it in our Anglicized way. OK.

There's another way that the Bible uses this. I think I looked up 12 or 14 different examples of this in the New Testament Greek. And that is the word genea is used as groups of people that can be from all different times. In other words, we see this discussion about an evil generation, and we're not just talking about the one generation in a horizontal timeline, we're talking about people who share the same commonality of being in a particular group. The "bad people" or even the "good people" can be called a generation. That, if you're going to look at a line that's horizontal, you're going to compare this to circles. You can draw a circle around a group of people who share some common characteristic and say, there's a generation. And there are at least 14 examples of that in the Greek New Testament.

There's another way to define this. As a matter of fact, if you open up the BDAG, we call it, it stands for Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich, the most authoritative Greek dictionary, lexicon of the New Testament in ancient literature, you're going to find the way that it immediately starts to define this word genea, or jenea or genetics or genealogy or generation. It doesn't speak of a horizontal line, it speaks of a vertical line in time.

It speaks, I mean, just read from the lexicon, as technical as it may sound, "A term relating to the product of the act of generating and with special reference to kinship, frequently used of familial connections and ancestry." Can you see the vertical line there? Generation, those descending from a common ancestor, a common ancestor. That goes through time. Definition number one, "Those exhibiting common characteristics of interest, race or kind." Common characteristics in terms of are you a "good person" or a "bad person," that's circles. Common characteristics of one time in a timeline, that's the horizontal timeline, we're all in the same generation. Or we can say, we're all in the same generation in a vertical sense, going back in ancestry.

I'm going to say which is the best that fits the context, not only our context of thinking about it from

a 21st century perspective, but the original context. People who were listening to Jesus talk about, what was he talking about? Armies surrounding Jerusalem. Jerusalem is what? The capital of Israel. The temple, the center of religious Judaism, having not one stone left upon another. Having all this stuff going on so bad that you don't want anyone to be there when it happens because you are going to have people running into the hills, and I hope it doesn't happen, I hope there are not nursing mothers.

OK. The people are going to be decimated? Oh, and all the preceding discussion about you, the Messiah, the king of Israel, and that's going to be the title over his head, being crucified, being rejected, being whipped, being beaten, being delivered over to death. Now all of these things have preceded this conversation and so they sit, a day before Jesus gets betrayed in the garden, and he says these things about what's going to happen in the future as they watch the center of Judaism, as the jewel of the capital city of Israel. And he says, listen you need to know that this genea, this generation, this genetic team, this ancestry, this people who we're talking about here, they will not pass away until all has been accomplished. That's my take on this passage and I wouldn't preach it if I didn't think I was right. So, I think I'm right about this.

We're not talking about a horizontal timeline, we're talking about the root of the most basic way you could understand this word, and that is dealing with a common characteristic of "familial connection and ancestry." The question would be, what's going to happen to Israel? Is Israel going to make it through all this? Everything about Israel looks like it's on the chopping block. Is it over? Maybe the, if you know theology, the replacement theologians are right. This is the end for Israel, going to wipe them off the map. Well then I open up my Bible and if I'm not a Preterist then I look at, for instance, the book of Revelation and I see things about 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe. You mean Manasseh and Naphtali and Ephraim, they're all going to be a part of this? Oh yeah, they're all listed there. What are you talking about? All Israel is back on the table? You're telling me that there's a temple there, it talks about in the book of Revelation?

You mean, this whole thing is functional and God still working with Israel? And you open up the book of Romans and you look in Chapter 11 and you say, wait a minute, you've got these people who are enemies because they reject the Gospel, enemies as it relates to the Gospel and to Christ, but in terms of the promises to their forefathers, they're still beloved? You mean someday they're going to take those people and you are going to graft them back into the nourishing root of this olive tree? They're getting natively again in the good graces of God? You mean, the call and the gifts are irrevocable and God's going to somehow bring them back? Yeah, I think that's exactly the time to say this statement. If not, I don't understand why this statement is here, other than to say it looks really bad for Israel.

But you know what? Israel, this generation, is not gonna pass away until all of this has taken place, including the coming of the kingdom, which by the way, plays prominently in Revelation Chapter 5 through 19. As a matter of fact, you have no reference to the Church in that section. What you have are continual references to the people of God in terms that are clearly national Israel. Now, if you want to put that back in 70 A.D., you can do that as a Preterist, or you can look at this and say, I think the promise here is: listen, Israel's not down and out. As a matter of fact, as Jeremiah 31 said when we started the series with this, if the moon and the stars and the order of the universe, including the seasons, if they go away, well then Israel will cease to be a nation before me, God promises. They're going to be my nation.

Yeah. When you sit there and share the Gospel and they reject that, yeah, you got someone who is

just as bad as any old guy you talked to who rejects Christ at your work. I understand that. But in terms of the promises made to his forefathers, for the sake of his forefathers going back to Abraham, God says I'm not done with that group of people yet. And I do think that's the concern here, is his faithfulness. Faithfulness in historic context to Israel. Faithfulness, though, that we can learn from and be encouraged by. Faithfulness in terms of a God who is faithful and a God who is faithful to keep his promises no matter how unfaithful the person he's made the promise to is.

Number two on your outline. Did we already say it? "Be Thankful for God's Faithfulness." If you get nothing else out of that complicated discussion of generation, please get that. God is a faithful God. And have we not called this to your attention in the series already? That Hosea is told to go marry Gomer, this woman who's a temple prostitute, who's got kids born outside of marriage. These unfaithful children, these children of harlotry as it's called. And now you're supposed to go out there and love her and in the middle of this marriage she's going to run off and pursue her old career again. And then I'm going to tell you, go out into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her and bring her back.

See, that picture of the faithful love of God, because he said "I'm going to love you. I'm going to," as it says throughout the prophets, "to blot out your transgressions for my sake." Why? "Because I made a promise to you. I'm going to set my love on you, not because you're lovable," Deuteronomy says, "but because I made a covenant and a promise to love you." God is a faithful God. Even today, the people who turn their backs on God who are of national Israel, God says I'm not done with that nation yet. I believe that's certainly the emphasis of this text. And even if you don't buy my eschatology, I hope you will certainly stand back and say, God has proven with historic Israel, how faithful he is.

The Times of the Gentiles, in my mind, in this passage, will not exterminate the people of God. And I say that's helpful for the first century because of all that Christ has said. Is it not helpful for our great great grandparents who would be asked about Israel and go, "I don't know? They're dispersed all over the world. There's no future for them." And Jeremiah speaks of that prophecy of the dry bones coming together in the valley. And they come back together and they reassemble.

Let me give you another one. How about this one, Hosea Chapter 3 verses 4 and 5, the children of Israel. Now this is a prophet to the northern nation. It's very early on in the prophets of the Old Testament. "They're going to dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods." Now that's an interesting progression. They're not going to have a king. They're not going to have a prince. They're not going to have a sacrifice, they're not going to have a place to do those sacrifices. They're not going to have ephod, which the high priest wore. They're not even going to have household gods, which the compromised Israelites had in their worship.

They're just going to be national Jews, but "Afterwards," verse 5, "the children of Israel," listen to this carefully, "shall return and seek the Lord their God." Why? Because Hosea would tell us, he goes out into "the wilderness and speaks tenderly to them" and he wins them and woos them back. And we read it all again. "Afterwards the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king," David, who has long since died when Hosea wrote this. What are we talking about? Second Samuel 7, that promise of a Davidic king that was the perfect representation of all that David was just a faint shadow of. Who is that? The Messiah. They're going to love the Messiah. They're going to love Yahweh, their God, "and they shall come in fear to the Lord," that reverence, that worship, "and to his goodness," When? When? "in the latter days."

All before the end, you're going to see a reassembling. If you want to look at when this happens, I think you take the words of Scripture like the Time of Jacob's Trouble as he purifies his people, the Great Tribulation as it's put in the Olivet Discourse, as we see played out in the book of Revelation. What's going on? 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel. They're all assembling the people of God and bringing them back to the Messiah. It's exactly what we see in Romans 11, a grafting in of national Israel back into God's blessing.

What a faithful God to do that to people who have shined on for centuries. Well, maybe not you in name, the God of the Bible, but the Christ who saves them, they've looked away. Does that mean individual Jews? I've said this clearly enough in the past, haven't I? Does that mean that individual Jewish people who you know are fine, you don't need to share the Gospel with them because they're saved? The answer is no, of course not, I don't mean that. Everyone who rejects Christ is lost. Romans Chapter 10 verses 1 and 2, Romans Chapter 9 verses 1 and 2. Paul's heart for the lost Israelite is they're lost if they reject Christ.

But the national Israel, the national genea, the jenea, the genetic connection to Abraham, God's not done with that group of people. There will be a final generation, I believe, that for his own name sake, as Isaiah 48 says, he will forgive them. He will bring them back. As Hosea 3 says, he will have them "seek God, and David their king, and they'll come in the fear to the Lord to his goodness in the latter days."

Be thankful for God's faithfulness and, if nothing else, can you say that you, I hope, as a Christian, pray to worship a faithful God, in the words of Second Timothy Chapter 2 verse 13, "even when you're faithless he remains faithful." Why? "Because he cannot deny himself." Why? Because he's made a covenant commitment to you to say, "I am your God and you are my people."

As a matter of fact, if you want a parallel between Hosea and a New Testament passage, jot down James Chapter 4, that I've referenced in this series already. And that is that, we as Christians, when we become worldly, we may not bow down to Baal, we will not sacrifice our kids to Molech, but you may be sacrificing your kids to what every other parent in Orange County sacrifices their kids to, and you may be bowing down to a lot of the materialistic things that every other Californian is bowing down to. And when you do the Bible says, listen, you ought to wake up to that. Friendship with the world, hostility toward God. And what you need to see, and he calls them adulteresses, it's time to come back.

Here's the best and brightest spot in James Chapter 4. Draw near to God and he'll think about what to do with you. Is that what it says? "Draw near to God..." and what? "He'll draw near to you." You've kind of scooped your way down the bench moving... You used to love God, used to love his Word, used to share the Gospel, used to pray every morning, used to be on fire for God. But you started to be like those at Laodicea, you're getting colder and colder. And a good sermon and a good book and a good quiet time in the morning, if you ever might get to that as a lukewarm Christian, might get you to the place of going, "Wow. Here's the promise of God. I've really slid a long way from him, but if I draw near to him right now, the promise of Scripture is he'll draw near to me." Here's a faithful God who says, "Come on, purify your hands, purify your hearts, wash your hands, purify your hearts, drawn near to me, humble yourself, I'll exalt you."

Just like Israel as a nation. The macrocosm of a national paradigm. Looking at your life, if you've strayed from God, you walk into a church this morning and there's been some stuff in your week

that you think, "Wow, that's not what Christians should do." The faithfulness of God is, "I'll keep my promise." And here's a promise for you. "Confess your sins and he's faithful and righteous to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness." First John Chapter 1 verse 9. How important it is that you call on a faithful God and say, "Man, I got to draw near to you and confess my sins."

You want to talk about the fidelity of God to his promises. God has been faithful to a generation and by that I mean an ancestry that will not pass away. He's got that on his timetable. I talked about the first century, it's amazing now, it's easy for you in the 21st century, "Yeah, they got FA-18s, they got bombs, they'll be fine." That's not what your great great grandparents were saying when they couldn't think about God still reassembling Israel and getting them ready for a great messianic revival. But the Bible, I believe, makes that clear.

Verse 33. I've already pointed this out. What an incredible statement, that Jesus, sitting there with sandals and brown eyes and a beard growing out of his chin, could say something like this, "Heaven and earth will pass away..." Talk about Israel not passing away, heaven and earth can pass away. "But my words..." I'm making a promise right now, including that Israel won't pass away, and that all these things are going to take place just as I said in the sequence I said them, 'my words aren't going to pass away.'"

Jot this number down, 417. 417. That's a lot of times. I mean, I know the Bible is a big book and this is just these particular words, 417 times the prophets said this, "thus says the Lord." And there's a lot of other variations on that, but just that perfect phrase, I looked that up, and 417 times. "What are you trying to say?" Here's what I'm trying to say to all those who think Jesus is just a prophet. When prophets speak authoritatively, they say, "this is what the Lord says." "Thus says the Lord." They don't ever stand up, I don't care if you're Elijah or Elisha, you don't stand up and say, "my words will never pass away." You say, "God's word will never pass away." As a matter of fact, Isaiah said that in Isaiah 40, "The grass withers, flower fades, but the word of our Lord stands forever." Jesus stands up with sandals and toenails and eyelashes, think about this, and he says, "my words will never pass away. I've just told you about stuff in the distant future. I told you that the Son of Man is going to come on a cloud with great glory. I told you about a great world-wide tribulation that's going to happen. I've told you that Israel's not going to pass away. I'm telling you all this, and you know what, my words will never... the earth will flee away before my words pass away." What an incredible Christological statement.

If you're still thinking that Christ is just a prophet, which most of the fastest growing religionists in the world still affirm. "Oh Jesus, you can have your Jesus. He's in our pantheon of prophets, but that's all he is." No, he is God incarnate. No one make statements like this but God.

But that's not what I'm here to emphasize. That's an interesting sidebar but let me say what this context calls for. When Christ stands up and says, "I've told you stuff about the future, but let me tell you this." It's absolutely 100% going to happen. It's more surer than the earth spinning around another time tonight. Then you and I ought to walk away from this passage saying, I am confident in the predictive prophecies and promises of God. Jot that down, number three. "Be Confident in God's Promises." If Christ said there's a tribulation coming on the world that's worse than any other and that his kingdom is going to follow that, then you can leave this place, you could you could print that on your Twitter feed, and I don't care if the world mocks you, it'll be the most truthful statement anyone could ever say, because God is putting his entire authoritative sovereign power behind that statement because that's what Jesus said. The world can pass away. This is going to

happen. This is going to happen. You can be confident in it.

Why? Well, let's get back to predictive prophecy. 25% percent of Scripture is predictive prophecy. Two thirds of it has already happened because 1,500 years of biblical history has recorded it, with a big gap in the middle of 400 years between Old Testament and New Testament. What am I proving by that? Christ, every time he makes a promise, every time that the Old Testament makes a promise, every time when the angel of the Lord makes a promise in the Old Testament, what do you have? You have it being fulfilled. The messenger, the Christ himself, I believe, the supreme, incarnate Christ, making statements about the future, it comes true.

What am I saying? If I was two thirds of the way through a, I don't know, a 72-hole golf tournament and my son gets on the t-box every time and hits a hole in one, every time, I think I can pretty well assure you that if you're going to play against me we're going to get a hole in one on this hole. I mean, the batting average is perfect and it isn't just 72-holes. This has been thousands of years when God makes promises, he is faithful to do it and he's proved it by doing it for centuries. Not only that, he is God and he says this about himself, "I can't lie, I can't die, I can't forget, I can't change," think about this, "I can't deceive you." Why? "Well, because I'm holy. I can't die, I'm eternal. I can't forget, I'm omniscient. I can't change, I'm immutable." You study the attributes of God and then you let that God say something authoritative about the future and you can bank on it. You got to be confident in it. Not only that he's God, he has sovereign power. Everything that he says is done with full complete authoritative knowledge.

Maybe one illustration here to chew on this week. When it comes to that, God has made a promise, not just about eschatological issues, about your plan, your particular personal plan that's eschatological. He says, "If you trust in him on the last day I will raise you up." He says this, "Confess your sins, I'll forgive you." Right? "If I justify you because you've trusted me by faith, I will glorify you." The personal things about your future. You need to know this. Every time God makes a promise, because he's fully omniscient and fully sovereign, as one writer put it, and it's so good and all just exploit it, it's a great illustration, he dates every single promise he makes. Think about that.

I'll illustrate it this way. If I came to you after the service and said I'm going to give you \$75,000. I'm going to give you \$75,000. If I said that to you at the door, I'm going to give you \$75,000, and for some reason you believe me because, let's say, I'm independently wealthy and a billionaire and I say, I'm going to give you \$75,000 in cash, in a briefcase, a brown briefcase, and it'll be full of bills, I got rubber bands around a bunch of the hundreds. I going to give you the \$75,000. It would probably make you smile. Maybe even you might hug me at the door. "Well, that's awesome. That's fantastic." And then I kept shaking hands, saying hi to everybody.

I think you might linger a little bit after the service. Right? And if I shake a lot of hands, talk to people, do a little counseling, pray with the person over here, finally make my way back to my office, kind of pack up my stuff, get in my car, drive away. You'd probably walk me to my car. At some point you're going to say, "Now?" And if I said, "It's not for you to know the times or the seasons." I'll bet you'd be kind of bummed about that. But if you believe me and you think, "Mike makes promises, he keeps his promises, he's faithful person, he's independently wealthy, he's got all the power to fulfill it." I'll bet you come early to church next week. You'd make sure to greet me. You might even greet me in my office, "Hey, how are you doing? Can I get you anything?" And then you might ask me, "Today's the day?" "Not for you to know the times or the seasons." Go through the rigmarole on the weekend, get in my car, go home, you watch me drive off. "Huh?"

You've told your friends now. Now your friends are starting, "Did you get your 75 grand from Pastor Mike?" "No, not yet." Summer rolls around, September, Christmas time, you're at the Christmas Eve service. I mean, you might start to hate me. Right? And if every time you say, "Is now the time?" "Not for you to know the times or the seasons." How many times can I tell you that before you get really frustrated with me? And let's say it's three Christmases from now and you meet me. You meet me at the door. It's Christmas Eve, you're shaking my hand and I smile at you, like I'm a generous person about to give you 75 grand. You probably say, "No, you're not going to give me that." Why? Because I didn't give you any date. Because of that it's easy for you to be dissuaded and discouraged.

But let's say this: if I said to you after the service today, "I'm going to give you \$75,000 in a brown briefcase, got some rubber bands around a bunch of the hundreds, it's just a packed briefcase full of money. I'm going to give it to you the day after Christmas three years from now." You still might greet me early on a Sunday morning. "Can I get you anything?" But you know what, I bet this week, next week, when your friends came up to you and said, "Did Pastor Mike give you the 75 grand yet?" You'd say "No, no, not yet, but it's coming though, I've got a couple more Christmases to go."

See, you would with great anticipation seek that day because you thought Mike's independently wealthy, he's got the power to fulfill it, and, you know what, he is faithful, he always does what he says. But the thing that you're missing in terms of being confident about my promise is you don't know the date, and that frustrates you. Now, I know this about God, knowing counterfactuals as he knows, he knows what would happen, clearly, I won't even put it in those humanistic terms, he knows what would happen if we knew the date for all these promises that he's made regarding your personal resurrection, about the return of the Kingdom, about the coming of the Tribulation, about all of these things. If you knew the date, your Christian life would be completely different than it is now.

So he told you, "not for you to know the times or the seasons," but he wants you to trust him and that's hard to do when there's no date. But I'll tell you what, there is that date. That's the whole point of my illustration. When God makes a promise in all of his sovereign power and then all of his omniscient, he knows exactly when it is, he's just put his hand over the date and he said, "You can't see it. It's better for your Christian life for you not to know it. You need to live like it could happen at any time, any Sunday, any Thursday night. It could happen any Christmas Eve. It could happen any time. Now, I got a date picked out and it's going to happen. And it's as sure as anything that could ever happen because I'm good for my promise. But don't grow weary and lose your confidence in my promise just because it hasn't happened yet."

Even the things that are actually promised to you right now you may doubt, because so many of them, you say, "I don't feel..." Like I just said, you confess your sins, the Bible says, "He is faithful and righteous to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness," and you may say, "Well, you said you'd forgive me, but I don't feel forgiven."

How dare you look at God and his promises, faithful always, doing exactly what he says he's going to do, and right now he says, you're guilt-free before me. He said, your sins could be as crimsoned, they're going to be white as snow, just come and reason with me. And here's the reasoning you need to say, "God, I'm sorry, I'm wrong, I'm a sinner, I confess my sin." You'd better believe what he says because that promise is dated for right now. If he says, "I'll never leave you and forsake you,"

and you're driving home going "where's God in my life." Well, if you're a Christian, the Bible says he's right there. This is Hebrews Chapter 13. "He will never leave or you forsake you." Never. "Well... I feel like I was with God at one time. I feel like he's not there now." John 10, "can't snatch you from my hand." No one can. No one can take you from my relationship. Romans 8, "nothing can separate you from my love," and love is not a feeling, it's his commitment to your well-being and your forgiveness.

"I need wisdom." Great, here's a promise. God says, "If you need wisdom, ask me. I will give it to you." There are so many things you're relying on some kind of exterior impulse to make you think, "Yeah, God is good for his promise," and so much of that wanes because these time-related promises, "Well... he just hasn't given me the 75 grand yet."

If you've been justified, you're going to be glorified. Every personal and global eschatological promise will be fulfilled, every prophecy will be fulfilled. They're all dated. You need to be confident. That's the goal of my sermon this morning. I'd like you to leave, driving out of the parking lot, confident, bold, assured, you're absolutely certain about these things. And that's hard for me as a pastor to make that my homiletical goal in a message like this this morning because God has made promises and they're going to be fulfilled, because so many Americans in our generation are already confident and bold and assertive about everything. Problem is, they have no reason to be. And that's really tough in our day.

I mean they feel secure. Think about... Here's a stat for you: financial security. Where are you on the scale of being financially secure? Tell me where you are on the financial scale. Here it is: 20% in a recent survey, 20%. Think about that, 1 in 5 of people think they're in the top 1% of financial security. That can't possibly be. Impossible. The math doesn't add up.

And speaking of math, America has slouched to the 25th in the world in terms of our math skills. You know that, right? We're 25 down. You can stack 25 other nations on top of us in terms of us being good at math. And yet the stats, look this one up, we are number one in the world at thinking we're good at math. No other nation thinks they're better than we are. We think we're the best at math, but the stats don't bear that out. They're very confident, very assertive, very bold, very certain.

In 1950, I think it was the Gallup poll that did a survey of high school seniors and they asked them this question: "Are you a very important person?" 1950 high school seniors. 10% of high school seniors in 1950 said, "Yeah, I'm a very important person." They redid that same exact poll recently. Are you ready for this? Today, high school seniors were asked, "Are you a very important person?" What do you think that number is? 80% of high school seniors said, "You bet I am. That's what my mom has been telling me my whole life at least, and I'm dumb enough to believe it."

All I'm telling you is I preach to a generation where everyone has been taught, sure of yourself. I mean, think about parents lying to a kid. "You can do whatever you want." You can't. I mean, think about that. You cannot do whatever you stinking want. There's no possible way. I mean, we lie to a generation of people, "be all that you can be." We think of ourselves so... "If I'm going to be loved by God, of course, it's because I'm so lovable. If I'm going to be forgiven because, of course, who wouldn't forgive a guy like me." This is how Americans think.

And all I'm telling you is, I'm trying to make you bold, confident, assured, not based on some fantasy of your lovability, your greatness. I don't want you to be confident in yourself. One of my favorite passages, Proverbs 28:1, says, "The righteous are as bold as a lion." Proverbs 28:1. But you



know what? I can assure you this, in the Scriptures the righteous are not bold because they are confident in themselves. Right? They are absolutely in Scripture undeniably bold because they trust in the promises of God, humbly trust in the promises of God. They know that if God said, "Confess your sins and you will be forgiven." "Draw near to me, I'll draw near to you." "You embrace me by faith. I'll be your adopted father, you'll be my adopted son."

That's what the Bible teaches and you know what? Bold, confident, assertive Christians trust humbly in those facts. I'd like you to leave today that way but not confident in yourself, but confident in a faithful God who's extended to you a set of very reliable promises. As Peter said, they're very great and precious promises. I know the world has been promised a lot of rocky, terrible, gloomy times, but he didn't destine us for his wrath. He's promised us his salvation. Trust in him and leave boldly assured in the good promises of God.

Let's pray. God, help us in a day when so many of our contemporaries have been confident in themselves, they have deemed themselves faithful. And yet, as Christians, we recognize the great promise of Scripture that all the promises of God, as Paul said, are yes in Christ. Christ has fulfilled every requirement so that the Father gives to the Son and we are recipients because we are in Christ. What a great biblical truth that I know that I will be redeemed. I will be in my body resurrected. I will be ushered into the kingdom. Not because I'm going to stand there saying, "Yeah, I deserve it. Yes, I've earned it. Yes, I'm so lovable that God, of course, loved me and didn't reject me," but because of the great and precious promises of Scripture, the covenants you make with us, the kindness you've extended of the redemption that we receive in Christ.

So God, thank you so much for the chance for us to think through these things that the promises of Scripture and the predictions of the Bible are absolutely founded on a God who cannot lie, a God who is always faithful, and a God who has all power to carry out every last promise that you've ever made. We trust in you this morning.

In Jesus name, Amen.