

When shall these things be?

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[0 : 00] Now as we pick up and continue again with this last section of St. Mark's account of the Gospel, we find Jesus now at the beginning of chapter 13 about to depart from the temple.

And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples said unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here. Now, if we don't look carefully at this, then we'll miss a little detail that is here.

Jesus has been in the temple teaching since, if we can put it in these terms, chapter 11, verse 27. Turn back another couple of pages and you'll see they came again to Jerusalem.

And as he was walking in the temple, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders and so on. And all the disputations, all the parables that he has told, we must take it, have been continuously carried out in the temple.

It is perhaps several days since he has had the cleansing of the temple. Which we see in chapter 11 from verse 16 and 17 and so on and 15.

[1 : 04] And when he's throwing out the money changers and so on, he's been pretty much teaching in the temple throughout that week continuously. But now we find here he is leaving the temple.

And what we read here is in fact he is leaving the temple for the last time. That's not explicitly spelled out here. But if you go on through the rest of St. Mark's account of the gospel, you do not find him going back to it again.

This is Jesus effectively taking his farewell of the temple. He went out of the temple. And it happens to be for the last time.

Now, to get the sense of context here, we really need to sort of cross-reference with Matthew's account here. If you were to find the end of Matthew 23, beginning of Matthew 24, and maybe put your finger in it or put in something to mark it there, that would be helpful as a cross-reference here.

Because sometimes Matthew fills in a wee bit of detail that maybe Mark leaves out and vice versa. We need the whole counsel of God, really, to get the whole picture, as it were, in technical colour here.

[2 : 09] And to get the fullness. To get the sense of context here. We need to recognise here that this is, as we said, Jesus' farewell to the temple. Let's look at Matthew's account here. End of chapter 23.

He is saying, from verse 37, Notice the use of the word, your house.

Not my house, the house of prayer. Your house is left unto you desolate. He means the temple. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

You won't see me again. The temple will not see me again. And Jesus went out and departed from the temple. Chapter 24, verse 1 of Matthew's account there. And his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

So it is more explicitly spelled out in Matthew's account that this is him now leaving the temple and taking his farewell of it, as it were, for the last time in his earthly ministry.

[3 : 25] Now, a little earlier on, we'll turn back to Mark 11, at verse 17. You will see that Jesus, at the time when he cleanses the temple, at the beginning of that week, he is still claiming it as his father's house.

Still claiming it as the Lord. They come to Jerusalem. Jesus went into the temple, began to cast out them that sold and vaunt in the temple, and over through the tables of the money changers, or the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thee. See the contrast there between my house, which the Lord is saying, And ye, the people of Israel, have made it a den of thieves.

The contrast between what God is saying, my house, what you have done to it. So his solution then is now, as he says at the end of Matthew 23, Your house.

You have taken it. You've made it. Your house is left unto you desolate. You didn't want it to be mine. You didn't want to honor me in the way that I had set out. You've turned it into a den of thieves.

[4 : 33] That's fine. You take it. I am going. I am leaving. He went out of the temple. When his last week of his earthly public ministry is completed, which he completes in the temple precepts, he went out of the temple.

And one of his disciples said, The master, see what stones are here. But even more than a departure from the temple, However, this represents also the last act of Jesus' public ministry.

I'll say that again. The last act of his public ministry. And if you look ahead at the chapters, you'll see again, he, after all, is either in private with his disciples, or at Bethany, again, in closed environment in the house there, or at the Last Supper, or Gethsemane.

But there is no more public ministry. There's no more public teaching. No more parables to all the people. No more disputes for the scribes and the Pharisees.

No more coming into the temple. It is complete in that sense. The only public act of ministry now remaining to Jesus was to die. That is the thing that he did absolutely in public, offering up that final sacrifice, and everything else now.

[5 : 55] was a preparation for that. The only thing left to do for his public ministry was to die. And everything now, from this point on, is simply preparation for that.

But the disciples are blissfully unaware of this. And if you think about it, every time that we take our leave of someone or somewhere, unless we happen to be going to the other side of the world, you know, if you've got a very aged, sick relative who comes to visit you, and you know that they haven't gotten long because they've got some life-threatening disease, and then they go back to Australia or Canada or New Zealand, it's reasonable to suppose you are seeing them for the last time.

But most people, most times, most cases, most places, we don't really recognize when it is that we see them for the last time.

Often, perhaps, we may, somebody may be taken from this world, and we think, oh, but I was just speaking to them last week. Oh, I just, I saw them when I was visiting with the mainland last year or whatever. I didn't realize then that I wouldn't see them again.

And you know, as Jesus goes out to the temple here at the beginning of chapter 13 in Mark, he doesn't do it with a great big sort of fanfare. He doesn't do it with a, a last sort of riposte against the scribes and the Pharisees.

- [7 : 14] He doesn't do it with a great big dramatic gesture. It's just he quietly exits, slips out. No drama, no fanfare, nothing.
- It's just, it quietly slips away. And so it is for so many things in this life. So much just slowly slips away, and we don't realize that it is for the last time.
- The glory is departing from the temple, and nobody notices it. Jesus is leaving. The Son of God is leaving.
- His Father's house here for the last time. The glory is departing quietly, without fuss, but irrevocably. And he, it, the glory, is gone.
- Now there is a lesson here for us. That whilst we may think that we have time and opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the things of the Lord, the house of the Lord, the word of God, it will always be there.
- [8 : 21] There will always be time. I can go back to it anytime I want. Isn't that how so many people in the world think about the Lord, or even about religion in general? Well, time enough to go to that when I'm old.
- For now, I want to enjoy life. I want to, I want to make my money. I want to pursue my career. I want to do the things I wanted in time enough for God. Later on, there will always be time.
- But the day will come when the opportunity has slipped away, without us even knowing it. The glory has departed from the temple. Ichabod.
- The glory has departed from Israel. And nobody, not even the disciples, actually know it yet. Israel has been exposed to the teaching of God the Son in his own house, in the courts of his own temple.
- And some agreed and some believed and many did not. And most probably just went about the ordinary daily business and didn't even give it a second thought.
- [9 : 25] And I would suggest to you that what has happened in the courts of the temple is simply a microcosm, what happens in the world in general. Some will believe him. Some will be in opposition to him.
- Some will think, yes, we must hear more of this man. But most will simply just go about the ordinary day-to-day business and will not even notice that he has been and gone.
- Friends, if your life is in danger of this happening, you need to act on it. And you need to act on it soon. You need to act on it now, really. Because, yes, the Lord has covenanted to be wherever his people gather, whether by many or by few.
- And, yes, we are few. But the Lord has promised to be in the midst even where two or three are gathered in his name. But opportunities for this will not be forever.
- Opportunities to close in with Christ will not be unlimited. And most are not in overt enmity to Christ. Most are not the scribes and the Pharisees or the money changers.
- [10 : 29] Most are just going about their business without even realizing that this Messiah has been writing under their noses. Don't let that happen in your life. Don't let eternity creep up on you.
- And suddenly the opportunity has slipped away. And it was right there. Only you reached out and grasped it. Jesus departs from the temple. And nobody notices who it is for the last time.
- The disciples are more concerned with the beauty of the stones. Some commentators suggest that perhaps the disciples reference here as not so much to wonder and admiration, but rather to almost disbelief that such wonderful stones and such beautiful buildings could possibly be swept away, as Jesus perhaps implies, that the strength of the temple would just be destroyed.

And he would rebuild it in three days. How could this possibly look at the stones that are here? Perhaps it is disbelief in a sense. And in all fairness, the stones, in some cases they're referred to as ashlar, were massive.

They were magnificent stones with which Herod's temple was built. They are recorded, some of them by the historian Josephus, as being of 40 cubits in length.

[11 : 48] That's approximately 60 feet long. A single massive block of stone. Huge stone, 60 feet long. Goodness knows how deep a wound stone.

Now if you think of a wall, high and deep composed of stones of this size, it's practically a wound solid rock. He describes, Josephus describes the pillars of the colonnade that supported Solomon's portico.

As being, you know, maybe 25 cubits tall. That's about 37 feet. All made of a single piece of marble in each case. You know, it's magnificent in terms of strength and power and architecture.

Now when the Romans came to besiege Jerusalem, they battered away at the walls of the temple for six days. And it made no impression. Little or no impression after six days.

Eventually, of course, they took the city and took the temple. But knocking down the walls, that was a different matter. History records that they battered away for six days. To no discernible effect.

[12 : 53] And yet Jesus says, answering, Now clearly, the stones of the, if you think of terms of the wailing wall that's in Jerusalem.

The reason why the Jews worship and pray at that wall is because it is reckoned by them, and thought to be, probably accurately, the last remaining piece of wall of Herod's temple.

Now, they think, well, if Jesus said every last stone would be thrown down, then how can that be true? Surely Jesus made a mistake. Well, there's two ways I think we should perhaps understand this.

First of all, if you look at the position of the Western Wall, or the wailing wall as it now is, you'll see the temple mount is pretty high up above it. And the wailing wall is down at what would almost certainly have been below ground level at the time.

In other words, these were foundation stones. Alternatively, it may be that the Romans had put their siege ramp. They built their siege ramp of earth and stones and so on up against that section.

[13 : 55] So that when they were destroying everything else, which they did do, by the way, under orders, they dismantled the temple and its precincts stone by stone. Massive as they were, and literally threw them down.

But also cross-referencing with Matthew's account. Jesus said unto them, chapter 24, verse 2, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.

Now, if Jesus is going out of the temple, towards the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron Valley, there is only one gate that he could go by. And that is the gate which nowadays tends to be referred to as St Stephen's Gate.

It's the gate that directly goes from the temple precincts out into the temple, it was the temple mount, over the Kidron Valley and up to the Mount of Olives. That one gate. He's looking around, showing them the walls, showing them the buildings.

Nothing here that will stand. That was literally true. The only piece which is left now, the Wailing Wall, the Western Wall, and that little bit of the temple wall, was almost certainly below ground level at the time, or part of the hill on which the temple mount was itself constructed.

[15 : 08] Jesus is not lying, because the Romans did destroy the temple, literally, stone by stone. They did take it apart.

You couldn't just demolish with a wrecking ball in those days. You had to prise each stone off. You had to cast it down. You had to break it up. That's what they did. They meant to make an example of the temple.

It is certainly true that they dismantled and demolished the entire temple, literally, stone by stone. They dug up the temple mount afterwards.

And so the Wailing Wall was almost certainly below ground level at the time. However, going back to what Jesus describes here, he sat, then, verse 3, upon the Mount of Olives, over and against the temple.

Now, the Mount of Olives is to the east of Jerusalem. So you go down into the Kidron Valley, then you go up the temple. Now, it's not a steep, spiky mountain like the Christian or whatever. It's a hill.

[16 : 06] It's a hill, which is more sloping gently than it looks to be from some angles. And you wouldn't sort of climb up to the summit of it and then sit on it and look over the city. He was heading for Bethany, where he lodged each night.

Now, that means Bethany was slightly to the south of Jerusalem. So you'd go round the shoulder of the hill of the Mount of Olives. So they'd be traversing the Mount of Olives sort of sideways at an angle.

And he'd probably sort of rest on the shoulder, the southern shoulder of the Mount of Olives, and rest there where the city is spread out in front of you. This is what we have.

He says, as he sat upon the Mount of Olives. He wasn't just going up past the tide. He was on his way to Bethany, which is about two miles from Jerusalem City. So they're probably having a rest at the sort of appropriate resting place on the shoulder of the mountain, sitting, looking down over the temple, or against the temple, as it says.

Now, Mark has a little sort of eyewitness detail here again, which the other gospel accounts don't have. He specifies who it is that asks him, when shall these things be?

[17 : 15] When will all these things be fulfilled? And he says, specifically, it's Peter and James and John, the inner circle, and Andrew as well. How can he be so specific?

Almost certainly, as we've said before, in the other little eyewitness details, the use of the Aramaic language in certain occasions, the feeling of Jesus' daughter, Palitha, Kumai, the fact that Jesus was asleep on a pillow in the boat in the midst of the storm, and so on.

And all the little details that Mark has that others don't necessarily have. And here's another little eyewitness detail. Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, when shall these things be?

And what shall the sign be when all these things shall be fulfilled? Now, so the disciples, perhaps, struggling with disbelief, you know, well, this is ever going to happen.

But they don't say, okay, tell us when it's going to happen. Jesus has said it's going to happen, so fair enough. So the question is, when? Now, their question, especially when you, again, cross-reference with Matthew's account, clearly conflates the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple with the end of the world and the second coming.

[18 : 31] Matthew 24, verse 3, As he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?

But now, the fall of the temple, the destruction of the temple mount, they are naturally assuming, well, this must mean the end of the world. It must mean the Messiah is coming back, when the worst thing that could ever happen to Israel has happened.

That's when he'll come back, because he won't allow that to happen without a fight. So they assume the destruction of the temple, the fall of Jerusalem means the end of the world, which means the second coming of the Messiah.

And you can see why they think that. Jesus himself, however, answers them with great care. First of all, he says, Take heed that no man deceive you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ. Now you'll notice that Christ is in italics there, so it's just not part of the original. It would literally just say, I am, and shall deceive many.

[19 : 38] But of course, we read in the other Gospel accounts, that many shall come. Matthew says, I am Christ, you'll receive many, and many false Christs shall arise, and so on. Now, in this instance, some take this to refer to imposters claiming to be Jesus Christ, come back again, having returned.

And indeed, there's perhaps some hints in the letters of Paul that some imposters may have been claiming just that. And some perhaps since then, charlatans have claimed to be Jesus Christ, as it were, come again in the flesh.

Most recently, perhaps, in the 1980s, David Koresh in the Waco cult in Texas claimed to be, perhaps alarmingly, a sinful Christ.

He claimed to be Christ, having come back, but as Jesus had been sinless the first time, this time he was coming back as a sinful Christ. And that made it okay for him to indulge every kind of appetite and sin and so on, because having been sinless the first time, but now sinful the second time, he was encompassing all of humanity.

Of course, one of his own followers who initially thought that he was the genuine article exploded that particular theory by simply quoting one verse of Scripture, Hebrews 9, 28, So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

[21 : 13] So Christ, when he comes again, it will be as the lightning shines from the east even to the west. But other people would claim to be him having come again.

Not only that, but also his history recounts again how after the Jewish nation had rejected the genuine Messiah, and I say the Jewish nation, I mean the majority of them.

You know, we have to recognize all the first Christians were Jews. All the apostles were Jews. If it hadn't been for the Jews, we wouldn't have the gospel at all. But the majority of the Jewish nation rejected their Messiah.

And the majority still do to this day. But having done so, the period after Christ's death and resurrection and ascension saw a whole raft of fake Messiahs, false Christ, claiming to be the full format of the Scriptures, claiming to be the one who would lead Israel out into glory against the Romans.

And of course the Romans squashed them one by one. They suppressed every single such rebellion. They suppressed all those who claimed to be the Messiah and were leading a revolt against Rome here, there, and everywhere.

[22 : 27] And of course they were complete fakes, complete charlatans. But the point is that after they had rejected the real one, the Jewish nation was troubled time and time and time again by false Messiahs.

And they hadn't had any of that trouble for the 400 years, you know, after the end of the prophets and before Christ came. It hadn't been an issue before the true Christ came, but it became an issue with fakes and charlatans after he had gone.

The devil has no divine initiative. He cannot come up with any originality. He can only copy the genuine article and present a fake imitation.

That is what he does with every sin that he offers you. It is in almost every case a perversion or a twisting or a fake representation of something good and something positive and something true which the Lord has already freely offered you.

And he makes it into something hideous, something sinful, something a little bit sick, something disgusting and yet enticing at the same time.

[23 : 41] And so he says, take this instead. This is so much better than what God really offers you. But he has nothing he can come up with himself. He can only take the original and twist it.

He can only take the original and copy it and present it as something different, something false. There shall arise false Christ. Many shall come and say, I am Christ.

Take heed that you be not deceived. And when you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not troubled. Now doesn't mean don't care about it, don't bother, I love wars or what.

It means rather let it not surprise you. Let it be no surprise to you when you hear of these wars and rumours of wars. Of course there are going to be these things.

Now it is a matter of, again, historical record that before the fall of Jerusalem, before the final war against the Jews, Rome itself was convulsed by different claimants for the imperial throne.

[24 : 39] One emperor killing another and then taking his throne and then somebody else killing him and so on. And all that convulsion would happen in the nations and across the empire before the fall of Jerusalem came.

nations shall rise against nations, kingdom against kingdom. There shall be earthquakes in diverse places. There shall be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of solace.

Or is it the strife elsewhere just like the birth pines, the first set of birth pines at the beginning, but it's not the actual childbirth. It's not yet all that is.

There's going to be worse ahead. But take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to castles and in the synagogues ye shall be eaten and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake for a testimony against them.

Now it's almost as if there's a shift here now. Luke's account of the gospel says in chapter 21 and verse 12, But before all these they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and so on.

[25 : 43] And it's almost like having been talking about the fall of Jerusalem which was, you know, about 30 years, 40 years in the future. He is now switching his attention to the disciples, the apostles' immediate lifetime.

Before all these things, in other words, it's implying that the synagogue and the persecution by kings and other peoples would be happening to them, the apostles, in their lifetime and ministry, which of course we do see fulfilled in Acts chapter 5 and verse 40.

We read to him, that is to Gamaliel, the son Hedra, agreed when they had called the apostles and beaten them. They commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. In Acts 25, verses 24 and 26, we read that Paul is brought before Festus, the governor, and then King Agrippa.

He testifies before kings and governors. The apostles are set before all these different authorities and are able to testify to them. We should recognize in verse 9 where it says, you shall be beaten in the synagogues you shall be beaten, you'll be brought before rulers and kings for my sake.

Notice a subtle distinction there. The synagogue or the temple council represents religious authority. We might even say ecclesiastical authority.

[27 : 02] If you think about how at the time of the Reformation the martyrs were burned at the stake not by false religions or by Islam or others but by those claiming to be the church.

They were put to death at the time by the religious authorities, ecclesiastical authorities. So false religion, because it is false religion that's against the servants of Christ, false religion will attack you and the synagogues you shall be beaten and you'll be brought before rulers and kings.

Now that's the authority of the state. There's a religious authority and there's a civil authority and they will both be against you at certain times. Kings and governors will be against you and you will be for a testimony against them.

You will testify to them and the gospel must first be published among all nations. Now it doesn't just say to all countries. Not just a case of well I preached the gospel in the capital of this vast country so now it's out of the gospel.

Not all nations. That means all people groups. Probably means all tribes and towns as well but however all people groups certainly. Now within the lifetime of the apostles almost certainly the whole Jewish nation heard the gospel.

[28 : 17] Either in Palestine, Judea itself or in the dispersion throughout the Roman Empire because wherever Paul and the other apostles went they went to the synagogue first and they declared the fulfillment of all the Old Testament scriptures and the word spread and when Paul got to Rome remember how the elders that greeted him there at the end of the Acts of the Apostles said well we've heard that this teaching is spoken against everywhere so they had heard about the gospel but they hadn't heard the details of it.

They had heard the gospel the witness, the testimony it had spread throughout the Roman Empire amongst the Jewish nation but other nations still had to hear it.

The gospel must first be published among all nations and that is still a requirement for us today but you know think of how with the internet and with that speed at which translations can now be made into more and more languages the Bible sent into more and more countries nations, tribal groups language groups and people the whole thing is speeding up the whole thing is hurtling toward its conclusion it may have taken centuries for us to get the Bible in our own languages here in this country but it's not going to take centuries probably for the final people groups to get it now with the way technology is with the ability for translators to work in different parts of the world and email each other their notes and translations and so on the way it works now the time is hurtling towards its conclusion before the gospel will be published among all nations but when they shall lead you and deliver you up take no thought beforehand for ye shall speak neither do ye premeditate but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour not speak ye for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost when there is such persecution when there is such a witness required the Lord will give you the words to say now we may be inclined to think oh well I could never do that

I wouldn't know what to say I wouldn't be able to testify just now we probably wouldn't we think oh well that was persecution oh I don't know what I would do and maybe that is true just now because just now we don't need that strength from the Holy Ghost just now we don't need to be articulate in the face of authority and kings and governors but come the day if we are prepared to stand fast in our faith in Jesus Christ the Holy Ghost will give you in that same hour what you will need to say and you might be saying well that's all very well for you to say you're standing up in a pulpit you think you can speak alright or at least you say enough but I mean I'm just ordinary what would I do I'm not a minister I'm not a preacher I wouldn't have it I can say to you with the authority of God that come the day coming out if you are put on the spot before authority whether religious or state for the gospel for the witness of Christ the Holy Ghost will give you what you need to speak why because God has said it don't mean it says it

God has said it in his word whatsoever shall be given you in that hour that speak ye for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost and you will be a witness a testimony verse 9 against them for them or against them because it will assuredly be one or the other when the gospel is proclaimed amongst a people or in the ears of an individual there will either be rejection or acceptance or perhaps a desire to hear more which may be the first stage of acceptance but either way it will either be a witness to them for their good or it will be a witness against them that come the last day it will be trotted out as evidence against your condemned soul look you heard the gospel there so and so testified it the word of God stated it it was in your hearing it was within your knowledge and you chose to reject it it will be a witness for us or against us in the prophet

[32 : 26] Ezekiel we read in chapter 2 verse 5 and they whether they will hear or whether they will forbear for they are a rebellious house yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them verse 7 thou shalt speak my words unto them whether they will hear or whether they will forbear for they are most rebellious and we may rebel against the Lord or we may receive the Lord but his gospel will be a witness will be a testimony to us or against us but a testimony and a witness it will be one way or the other now the brother shall betray the brother to death and the father the son children shall rise up against their parents and shall cause them to be put to death he shall be hated of all men for my own sake but he that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved don't we see that verse 13 to be so true nowadays in these days of tolerance and inclusion and diversity and all religions are to be tolerated except one the only thing for which there is no room in this wide diverse and inclusive society that our godless politicians seek to create the only thing for which there is no room is the exclusive claims of Christ there is no room for gospel

Christianity there is room for everything else no matter what atrocities may be committed by other religions no matter how the ridiculous insanity of the denial of biological facts and little boys and girls no matter how intolerant will be universities or student unions or whatever no everything else must be given space but not the gospel not the love of Christ you will be hated of all men for my name's sake whether it be the state whether it be other religions Henry and Pilate were made friends that day when they crucified Jesus between the two of them they put him to death whether it be the unbelieving Jews and the chief priests whether it be the unconcerned world whether it be the indifferent Romans he shall be hated of all men for my name's sake now when it talks about the brother betraying the brother to death and the father's son it's entirely possible that this is a reference to the gospel dividing families and surmounting ties of blood their family or affection and all other forms of wrath bound loyalty and love which will be tried and tested and defined ultimately by the claims of Christ on the life and the heart and the body and the soul of each of his followers one whom he calls to be his children

Christ doesn't just want a wee piece of you he doesn't want your leftovers on the Lord's day he doesn't just want your spare time he wants all of your heart he wants all of your life he wants everything that you do to be viewed through the lens of the love of Christ he wants all your activity to be directed ultimately to his service he wants you body and soul he wants your heart he wants your life he wants you for time he wants you for eternity he wants you to be his and to secure that he has paid the highest price of all the price of his own life upon the cross the price of his own blood he will not settle for half measures it's not worth his while it's an insult to his sacrifice to his death upon the cross and that highest claim of all the claim of Christ will put all other claims in the shade people may say oh but you're my brother oh you're my husband you're my wife you're going to love me most no you're going to love the Lord most we all love our country when it comes to a choice between loyalty to our country or loyalty to Christ there is no contest

Christ must come first we all love the branch of the church to which we belong but we cannot put a badge before the saviour Christ must come first all other forms of earthbound loyalty will be tried will be tested will be defined ultimately by the great claims of Christ his followers when he desires for his children Christ will become the ultimate defining loyalty for all who are his and he will eventually become the defining enemy for all who will not be his we all know that Christianity is a soft target for those who want to attack something so they'll go against the gospel they'll go against Christianity they won't go against Islam they won't go against Hinduism they won't go against other religions they won't go against ethnic minorities it's okay to go against Christ and his followers it becomes the ultimate enemy for those who will not be his and even families will be divided by it he will eventually become the enemy they loathe most for those who will not be his or who demand to have him only on their own terms but also of course we have to recognise where it says the brother shall betray the brother to death you know brethren is what the apostle what the new testament calls fellow Christians could be a reference here also to the fact that brothers fathers children could be a reference to the falling away and subsequent enmity of those who once sought a place amongst the brethren of the Lord we need to take this again cross referencing with Matthew chapter 24 verses 12 and 13 because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold but he that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved there is certainly the implication that as compromise cools one's love for the

Lord so some indeed many because iniquity shall abound the love of many perhaps even most and that's a solemn thought some perhaps even many perhaps even most will eventually fall away Hebrews 10 we read at the end the last two verses now the judge shall live by faith but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him but we are not of them who draw back unto perdition but of them that believe to the saving of the soul Romans 9 tells us verse 6 not as though the word of God hath taken man effect for they are not all Israel which are all Israel neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children but in Isaac shall I see be called that is they which are the children of the flesh these are not the children of

[39 : 41] God but the children of the promise are counted for the seed just because we may belong to the church physically in the flesh does not guarantee our salvation just because that is our background and our culture or our youth what is our relationship to Christ many perhaps most will eventually fall away 1st John chapter 2 verse 19 puts it thus they went out from us but they were not of us for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us now we have to be careful and make sure that we only apply that to the relationship to Christ it's not something we can apply to the denominational badge just because people switch congregations or branches of the church just because they may choose to alter the way they worship it doesn't mean that they have gone out from Christ but if they have turned their back on him then they haven't been fallen away what is our solution here well Jesus tells us yes you'll be hated of all men but he that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved it is to go on with the

Lord it is to go farther with the Lord it is to go deeper with the Lord it is to go on to the end of the way and we might say well not long now how many days do you think it is that we have how many years do you presume you are spared for the end of the way may not be so very far away but if it is you are not required to take huge strides to get there you are not required to see into the distant beyond you are required only the strength of each successive day one day at a time one step at a time each step day by day go on with the Lord and thus as each day is secured and as it were nailed down with prayer and with the word and with strengthening of that relationship to the Lord and going on in the experience of Christ day by day by day so there is less and less room for the devil to get his talons and claws into you go on with the

Lord go further with the Lord go deeper with the Lord go on to the end of the way for he that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved let us pray give