

Matthew 24 and the Coming of Christ

(The following is the substance of an address given by Rev David Silversides at an after-church meeting at Loughbrickland Reformed Presbyterian Church on 26th October 2003.)

Matthew 24 has been much used and much discussed and much debated. Whole systems of prophetic views have rested sometimes very much on the claimed support of this passage. It has to be said, however, that often the basic principles of interpretation are overlooked. Assumptions are made and interpreters can be in too much of a hurry to get to the detail to notice certain basic things. Let us consider this passage.

1. The Question that was Really Two Questions.

In Matthew 24 the Lord Jesus has said in 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." Before this chapter, Christ is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, for example, chapter 23 and verse 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." At the end of this chapter, we have in verses 42 to 51 a parable concerning the coming of Christ. In chapter 25 we have three more parables concerning the coming of Christ: the parables of the ten virgins, the talents and the sheep and the goats. So this passage

comes between Christ's prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and a series of parables concerning his return. This should help focus our minds on the fact that Christ is dealing with two things in these verses in Matthew 24. Christ having said that there shall not be one stone left upon another of the temple, solicits a question from the disciples in verse 3, "And 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?" They asked this question because Christ had spoken of the destruction of the temple. After the disciples expressed amazement at the temple buildings, Christ said they will be destroyed again in verse 2.

The destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple was something of which the Jews and even the disciples could scarcely conceive and so the disciples asked for an explanation which assumes that such a momentous change could only come at the end of the world. That is why they say in verse 3, "when shall these things be?"(the destruction of the temple,) "and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" They thought they were asking one question because they assumed that the temple would stand to the end of the world. But the Lord Jesus Christ is actually answering, unknown to them, two questions. They were asking what they thought was one question but it was actually two: when will the temple be destroyed and when will be the coming of Christ. So the Lord Jesus is answering a question that was really two questions.

2. The Form of Christ's Answer.

Christ distinguishes these two events, the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. He speaks of things that are not signs of the end, verse 6, "For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." He mentions what must take place before the end could come, verse 14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." So the destruction of Jerusalem is a great event but it is not a sign of the end. It is not a sign that Christ is about to come. By contrast, he refers to the day of his coming in verse 36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Christ is distinguishing between great upheavals, including the destruction of Jerusalem of which there would be clear warning signs, and the day of his return which will have no early warning signs. Christ is answering a twofold question and is distinguishing these two events: the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in AD 70; and his coming again in glory.

Notice also that Christ takes in both events and more. He looks at the whole future stretched out before his mind and deals with near events and far events as if in one picture of the future. If you look at a picture you can describe it by saying the lake is in the foreground and the hills are far away. It is all one picture. So Christ is describing the future. He is describing the destruction of Jerusalem; he is describing things that will happen in the apostles' days and beyond throughout the whole age

between the first and second coming of Christ; and then he is describing his return in glory.

3. Christ Gives Great Happenings that are not the Signs of the End in Verses 4-33.

Verse 6, "but the end is not yet." Verse 14, "and then shall the end come." The term 'the end' is used of the last day. 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then cometh the end." Or 1 Peter 4:7, "but the end of all things is at hand." This is the meaning of the term 'the end.' He is talking about the end of the world just as in verse 3 when the disciples ask, "when shall be the end of the world?" Christ is giving tumultuous events that are not a sign that the end is about to come.

Let us look through them. In verses 4 and 5, "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." False Christs are not a sign of the end. It refers here not merely to false claims to be the Christ but also false claims to be Jesus Christ returned and come back. He is saying this not to unbelieving Jews but to the disciples. It is not just false claims to be the Messiah but false claims to be Jesus, the Messiah returned. Such false claims to be Jesus Christ returned are not particularly a sign that the real Jesus Christ is about to return. They are not a sign of the end.

Verse 6, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise

against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," and so on. The Roman Empire secured a long period of large scale peace known as the famous Pax Romana, the Roman Peace, but this would not continue indefinitely and the norm of wars and rumours of wars would resume again. When this happened, the disciples were not to think that the end was now about to happen. The end is not yet. This passage is teaching the exact opposite of what the majority of people use it to maintain. They say that wars and rumours of war are a sign that the end is nigh. Christ is saying the exact opposite; he is saying the end is not yet. When these things happen, it is not a sign of the end. People tend to pick up ideas "second-hand" and do not check or question them. They receive usage and this idea that wars and rumours of wars is a sign of the end is circulated and nobody actually bothers to check whether the text says it. It says that it is not a sign of the end. So the next time somebody says, "We are getting near the end because there are war and rumours of wars," tell them to look the passage up. It says the end is not yet. It is not a sign of the end. There will always be wars and rumours of wars.

What do the modern reports of wars and rumours of wars tell us about the coming of Christ? Nothing. What did the war in Iraq tell us about the coming of Christ? Nothing. No more than the wars that have taken place in generation after generation before us. This blunder is not only for our generation. When there were great wars in the past, people said, "Oh, it is the end." It was not.

There have always been wars and rumours of wars ever since the fall of man.

Verse 7, "and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." Another apparent sign that is no sign are the famines, pestilences and earthquakes. There have always been famines, pestilences and earthquakes but Christ calls these things the beginning of sorrows, the birth pangs, the early contractions. When the disciples see them, they are to regard them as only the beginning of a prolonged trouble that will result in the return of Christ when the end really does come. So from the apostles' time right through to the end wars, rumours of wars, pestilences, famines and earthquakes will happen.

Persecution, heresy and apostasy are no sign that the end is coming. These things would come, verses 9-13, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." When these things happen, the disciples were to understand this is not a sign of the end. Some will deny Christ's name. It has happened all through church history. Iniquity abounds. The love of many waxes cold. They deny the faith. But a promise is given to the enduring. True saints will endure. They will persevere but

it is endurance that is required, not expecting deliverance by the immediate return of Christ.

Many of the parables were to teach the disciples the distinction between Christ's first coming and his return and that there was to be a long gap in between. The parable of the sower is telling them the kingdom in its glory is not just around the corner; there is going to be this long period of the Gospel being preached and the various reactions set forth in the four soils. The response to the Gospel is a mixture. Such persecution was to come upon the apostles and is a feature of the life of the church in the period between Christ's first coming and his return as a whole. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." So such persecution when it came upon the apostles was not to be construed as a sign of the end. It is just normal.

Why could these things not be a sign of the end? Because there was something that had to happen before the end. Verse 14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The fulfilment of the Great Commission with the result of an ingathering of a multitude which no man can number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues (Revelation 7:9) must take place before the end whereas these other things would be happening long before that. They happened in the apostles' generation; they have been happening generation after generation since but verse 14 has not been fulfilled yet.

Verse 14 also shows it is not true that each generation of Christians is required to believe that Christ could return at any moment. It is generally assumed that the Bible teaches that every Christian in each generation should believe that Christ could come at any moment. That is not true. The Apostle Peter did not believe that Christ could come at any moment in his lifetime. You remember in 2 Peter 1:14 where he speaks of his own death so he knew he was not going to be alive at Christ's coming. "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." Christ at the end of John's Gospel showed him by what death he would glorify God in John 21:19, and yet Peter could write in 2 Peter 3:12 of "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." So it is quite consistent to be for looking for his appearance and also to believe that we shall not live to see it. That is what Peter did; he looked for and hastened unto the day of God and yet he knew he was going to die because Christ had told him so.

Looking forward to the last day does not require an any-moment view of the return of Christ. Paul told the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord would not come until after the revelation of the man of sin." 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man

deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." We believe the man of sin has been manifest. We believe that is the pope of Rome, but that is not the point. The point is that he had not been revealed at that time and, therefore, the Thessalonian Christians are being told the return of Christ is not an option at the moment because this event must take place before it can happen.

These verses establish the point that it is compatible with Scripture to believe that Christ's coming cannot happen yet; there are things that must take place before the return of Christ is a possibility and verse 14 tells us, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The redeemed will be a multitude out of every nation, kindred, tongue and people. There are thousands of languages that have not one sentence of Scripture in them yet. There is only a minority of world languages that have any of the Bible translated into them and yet the redeemed will be out of every tongue.

Then we have the destruction of Jerusalem which, though predictable, is not a sign of the end, verses 15-22. It begins in verse 15, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains." This section is dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem. This is very clear from the parallel passage in Luke 21:20, "And when ye shall see

Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains," and so on.

There is no question it is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in AD 70. So this forms a very specific instance of a rumour of war and actual war. Those wars and rumours of wars would happen generally in the apostles' day and ever since. Here is a specific instance; Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans. The sign that this was about to happen is the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. 'The abomination of desolation' or 'the abomination that maketh desolate' is a phrase taken from Daniel 9:27 and Daniel 12:11. It refers to that which is religiously abominable and makes the holy place desolate as a result. Some refer this to the zealots allowing Idumeans into the temple prior to the siege by the Romans, others simply to the Roman armies starting to surround the city. But from Luke 21:20 the general picture is clear: once the Romans start besieging the holy city of Jerusalem, do not imagine the city will be preserved. It will not be like the siege in the days of Hezekiah. God is going to destroy Jerusalem by means of the Roman armies in his just judgment upon apostate covenant-breaking Israel. The parable of the vineyard will reach its full measure of fulfilment.

So when the Romans start surrounding Jerusalem, which took place in AD 69-70, then do not think Jerusalem is going to be preserved because it is not. That is what Christ is saying and he tells them what to do. Verse 16, "Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the

mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." They ought to flee immediately without hesitation. Christ expresses sympathy for the expectant mother and the nursing mother in verse 19. He exhorts them to pray that their flight would not be in winter because it would be much more difficult, neither on the Sabbath day which could refer to the Christian Sabbath and the additional distress of that, or some refer it to the Jews and their continuance of the seventh day which would hinder them greatly from fleeing.

Then the question is: why should they flee? Verse 21, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." The reason they should flee is because, far from Jerusalem being delivered, the city filled with Passover pilgrims would undergo the most appalling suffering this world has known. In the event in AD 70 the Christians on the basis of Christ's word did flee. They fled to Pella in Perea whereas the unbelieving Jews in the country all crowded into the city. They believed Jerusalem was safe. God would look after Jerusalem no matter what. They fled into the city but the Christians who believed Christ's word fled out of it into safety. The siege of Jerusalem was so ghastly that the Jews resorted to cannibalism; they even cooked and ate their own children. That is how desperate it became and even hardened Roman soldiers were stunned by what they found when they finally entered the city. One million Jews died, many by

crucifixion at the hands of the Romans, and another two million were sold as slaves. The city was destroyed and the ground ploughed up and sown with salt.

There have been other events where more people have been killed, but there has not been the extent of the suffering that they had in this siege of Jerusalem. In verse 21 and after this, Christ says, "no, nor ever shall be." So it is definitely the destruction of Jerusalem that is in view, not events immediately prior to the end. This shows what God thinks of unbelieving Judaism. Never mind all the sentimental nonsense of the dispensationalists: how wonderful it is to see these people at the Wailing Wall. It is an abomination to God. They despise the Gospel and what they need is to be brought to repentance and faith in Christ. That is what Paul prays for in Romans 10:1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Unbelieving Judaism is obnoxious and wicked and all of this tomfoolery of professing Christians pouring money into unbelieving Israel is a waste. What nonsense. This is what God thinks of unbelieving Judaism: he sent a pogrom, the severest judgment that this world has known.

But there is God's purpose of mercy also, verse 22, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Even this was shortened for the good of God's elect. The destruction of Jerusalem was a benefit to God's elect as it removed the temptation of undue attachment to the place, but specifically it was the shortening of this tribulation that was for the elect's sake.

Now what does this mean? Some suggest that this is because Christians had relations who stayed behind in the siege. Others suggest that although they escaped the siege, the turmoil did cause difficulty and hardship for them. But rather we are inclined to the view that 'all flesh' here refers to Israel in the context; God had a further purpose of mercy toward ethnic Israel as Romans 11 tells us. In other words, he insured the survival of ethnic Israel so that at length their fullness should be gathered into the kingdom of Christ. The descendants of the siege survivors would be grafted into the church of God. God had his elect in future generations of Israel and so Israel was not destroyed.

The next stage is false Christs who cannot deceive the elect, verses 23-33. Verse 23 says, "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." What was to be true of the period between Christ's first and second coming, that there would be wars and rumours of wars and so on, was particularly true at the time of the destruction of

Jerusalem, that is, that there would be false Christs and it may be that time particularly that Christ still has in view.

So he warns of false Christs and prophets and this did happen in the time of Jerusalem's fall. People are more impressionable at times of upheaval and for the Jews the destruction of Jerusalem was an immense event. However, God's elect would be preserved from being deceived. It if were possible they would deceive the very elect, but it is not. The elect would be preserved by remembering what Christ had said about his return. They would know it was not true when someone said to them, "Christ is in the desert. Christ is in the secret chambers." How would they know it was not true? Because Christ tells them that his coming will be unmistakable and that is the point of verse 27, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Verse 28 is probably a reference to Job 39:30. Just as the eagles or the vultures find the carcase, so those who believe what Christ has said, will love and not have any doubt as to his coming. It will be visible to the whole world "as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even to the west." Notice chapter 25, verse 31 says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." This is definitely referring now to the return of Christ though it is by way of contrast: the false Christs will claim a private appearance, whereas when Christ comes, everyone will know.

If they remember what Christ says about his coming, they will not be led astray. If someone says, "Christ is in the desert, the secret chambers," or whatever, they know to take no notice because his coming will be public and visible and clear and unmistakable. Verses 29-33 expand on the public and unmistakable nature of Christ's return compared with the claims of the false Christs. The tribulation in verse 29 does not need to be confined to the destruction of Jerusalem but to all the persecution and afflictions mentioned throughout these previous verses, the wars and rumours of wars, the earthquakes, the persecution and so on. In other words, tribulation is a mark of the church's life in this world. So the redeemed in Revelation 7:14 are "they which came out of great tribulation," and the picture is of all the redeemed. People say it is talking about some special tribulation. It is not. It is talking about the tribulation that is the lot of God's people in varying degrees throughout the generations. All the redeemed have come out of great tribulation and their robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb. The parallel passage in Luke 21:24 confirms that this tribulation extends beyond the destruction of Jerusalem and is talking about the tribulation that belongs to the people of God throughout history to the end generally. Luke 21:24, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." That indicates that the timescale in view is way beyond the destruction of Jerusalem and so the tribulation in Matthew 24:29 is talking about the tribulation that

belongs to the whole period between the first and second coming of Christ. After this period, after the whole New Testament age, then Christ will come and "the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken," and so on.

It is after those days between the first coming of Christ right up to the second, that Christ will come. After all the tribulation, the persecution and so on has run its course, Christ will come. He will come amidst commotions, verse 29. He will come visibly and gloriously, verse 30, and with great sound, gathering in his elect, verse 31, for this is the end. The little illustration in verse 32 is to show that when these things start to happen, the end has come. The pseudo-Christ's out in the desert and in the secret chambers can be safely ignored because when Christ does come, there will be no doubt about it.

4. Fulfilment in that Generation.

Verse 34, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." The difficulty of this verse has sometimes been met by trying to make 'generation' mean something different than what it normally means. This is not the answer. The answer is to treat the description of Christ's actual return in verses 27-32 as a parenthesis, a diversion by way of contrast to the false Christs. So when Christ says, "These things shall all be fulfilled in this generation," he means the apostles' generation will see all the things that are not

a sign of the end. What we have in verses 27-32 concerning the actual coming of Christ is simply given by way of contrast to the claims of the false Christs in the desert and in the secret chambers. It is not one of 'the things' that will be fulfilled; it is simply given to say, "You do not need to worry about these false Christs that will come even in this generation because this is how I will come. It will be sudden. It will be public. It will be seen by all," and so on.

So when Christ says, "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled," he is not talking about his return described in verses 27-32 because that is just by way of contrast to the false Christs. What he is saying is this generation, the apostles' own generation, would see the one-off event of the destruction of Jerusalem. They would also see wars and rumours of wars; they would see kingdom rise against kingdom; they would see earthquakes, pestilence, famine; they would suffer persecution and be delivered up and so on. While the destruction of Jerusalem was a one-off event that they would see and other generations would not, they would see these other things, as well as other generations. He is saying, "You will see all of these things but they are not a sign of the end because the end is quite different."

5. The Time of Christ's Coming, unlike the Destruction of Jerusalem, Cannot be Predicted in Advance.

Verses 36-41, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." So "these things" in verse 34 cannot include the return of

Christ because in verse 36 he says, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man." There is a contrast. This generation would see wars, rumours of wars, famine, pestilence, persecution, false Christs, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem, and that could be predicted in advance on the information given but they could not work out the day nor the hour of the return of Christ.

The events that have already been mentioned in verses 27-33, the stars falling and so on, are concomitants, that is, things happening at the same time as the return of Christ. They are not things to be witnessed and then the time of Christ's return predicted; they are things that happen when Christ is coming.

Christ's return cannot be known in advance, verse 36 tells us. It will be unexpected, verses 37-39 tell us. It will separate, verses 40 and 41 tell us, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." He is saying his return is different from the destruction of Jerusalem. Regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, there will be warning when the armies are surrounding so they can flee, but they will not be given warning of his return. In other words, though there are things that must happen before Christ will return, you cannot work out when Christ will return from them.

He describes that return again as being sudden, unexpected, causing a division. Verses 40 and 41 have nothing to do with a secret rapture. It is simply saying

that there will be a separation of the redeemed from the lost at the last day. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." It is not saying that one will be taken up to heaven and the other left grinding at the mill on earth. It is simply saying there will be a division; one will be taken to glory, the other will be cast out, and that is why we have the parables that follow. The parable of the unfaithful servant in verses 42-51 shows the suddenness of Christ's return. The parables of the ten virgins, the talents, the sheep and the goats show that there will be a division when Christ returns. So verses 40 and 41 are indicating the separation that will take place at the return of Christ. They are not teaching a secret rapture because the subsequent parables all deal with a clear division between those who go to heaven and those who go to hell, not between those who are taken from the earth to heaven and those who are left of the earth. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal."

Some lessons from this:

- 1. All generations of Christians are not required to believe that Christ could come at any time.**

There are things that have to happen before Christ's return is a possibility, verse 14 establishes that.

- 2. The destruction of Jerusalem could be timed by events.**

Christ says when you see the armies surrounding Jerusalem, it is coming, the destruction is going to happen, get out.

3. By contrast, none of the events that must occur before Christ returns can be used to pin down when that return will take place.

Yes, there are things that must happen, verse 14 tells us that, but these events are not such that we can narrow down and say, "This is when Christ will return."

4. Great commotions do not tell us when Christ will come.

Wars, rumours of wars, false Christs, earthquakes, famine, pestilence, persecution, none of these things are signs of the end.

5. When Christ does come, everyone will know that he has come.

That is why the false Christs that are supposed to be in the desert or the secret chambers can be ignored. Christ's coming is not secret. There is no secret rapture. There is no secret coming of Christ. That has more in common with these false Christs who are said to be in the desert, in the secret chamber. Christ's return is visible, unmistakable, and he is telling the disciples, "No need to worry." He is telling all the people of God that when he comes everyone will know, every eye shall see him.

6. There is nothing in this passage which contradicts the view of our Puritan and Covenanter forefathers that the greatest times of Gospel blessing are still to come.

Matthew 24 does not prove that that will happen but it does not contradict it. There are passages elsewhere which indicate that it will happen. We just need to clear away here the misconceptions that people have of this passage. They assume that the things that are not signs of the end, are signs of the end, and they think that the things that were signs that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed, are signs of Christ's return. But the passage is actually teaching that all these commotions are not signs of the end and that whereas the destruction of Jerusalem was predictable, the coming of Christ is not.

7. We must learn to query offhand quotations from this passage.

People quote verses from this passage and they never look at what the passage is teaching overall. They apply what refers to the destruction of Jerusalem to the return of Christ and they do the exact opposite of what Christ is saying in the passage. They try to predict whereas Christ is saying you cannot predict. They are known by no man and whatever commotions are going on in the world, he is saying they are not signs of the end. That is why the prophecy merchants and the Middle East experts will always get it wrong.

8. See how the Lord orders all things for the good of his elect.

That stands out in the passage. His purpose of mercy shall be fulfilled. He governs everything for the elect's sake. His elect will be called and they will not be deceived to the point of apostasy. They will be kept and the redeemed of the Lord shall be a multitude which no man can number. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD."