



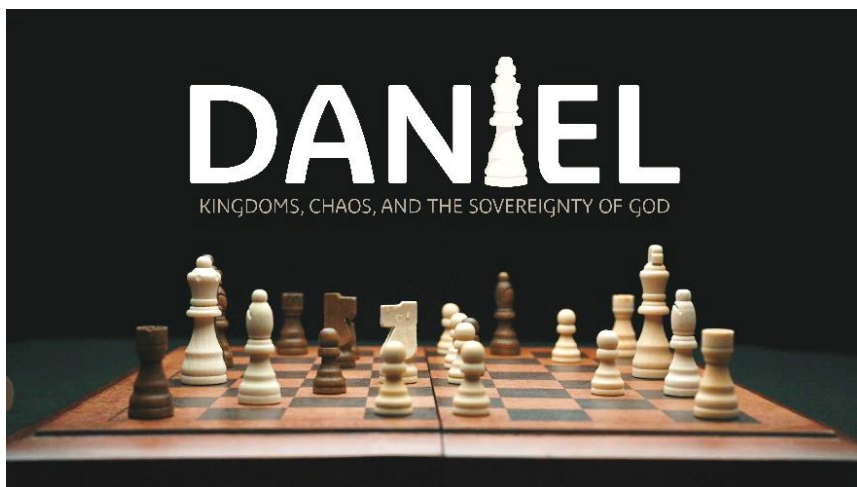
VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

**It's the End of the World
as We Know It....
and I Feel Fine?**

**DANIEL:
Kingdoms, Chaos and the
Sovereignty of God**

Mark 13:1–37

Tim Badal | February 25, 2024



It's a pleasure to have each and every one of you with us this morning. I'm going to ask you to turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark this morning. You say, "Wait a minute. I thought we were in the book of Daniel." We are in the book of Daniel, but we're going to take a half-time huddle. We're halfway through the book of Daniel and we need to prepare ourselves for the weeks to come. What we have here is a change in genre that doesn't often happen right in the middle of a book of the Bible. For the last six chapters, we have been studying the historical narrative of Daniel's life.

For a brief review, Daniel, a real person, was enslaved by the empire of Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar. He was taken into captivity with all the other Israelites in his day; they were taught a lot of new things. They had to figure out how to live in a pagan world where their God was not held in high esteem. And what great lessons we've learned from watching them be faithful, establishing themselves on the firm foundation of Who God is and knowing He would not let them down—and He won't let us down either.

As we head into Daniel 7, we move from historical narrative to apocalyptic literature. What we're going to see in these upcoming chapters is a series of Daniel's visions and dreams. These are going to be amazing and at times, kind of scary. God is going to interpret these dreams, which will have their fulfillment in the future. That means we have to do things a little differently with this genre of Scripture. What Daniel is going to be talking about is what we call the end of days, the apocalypse. It's the thing that movies are made about.

When I was a teenager, there was a song by the group R.E.M regarding the end of the world, using the phrase "the end of the world as we know it." Then the refrain said, "I feel fine." How do you feel this morning about the end of the world? How confident are you in God's promises regarding it? What do you know about it so you can stand firm on that foundation?

By the way, how many of you know that R.E.M song? The reason I ask is that we probably know the first few words, but then he takes off sprinting and we just start making stuff up. In fact, in a couple different movies, that song comes on and people just start mumbling things because they don't know exactly what he's saying and because it's happening so quickly. That that's not true just in this song. That's true in how we approach the end times.

Some of us know a few important words, then we just make stuff up as we go. We know things like tribulation, antichrist, rapture, millennium. But beyond that, we really don't know how to place those things. We don't know where exactly they go. We may not even know where they come from in Scripture. We were taught some words, some theologies, then we've grabbed hold of the theology of our favorite Bible teachers. Or maybe we've held on to the foundation received from Mom or Dad, just running with that. This morning I want to make sure we establish ourselves well, that we build a firm foundation on where we're going, so the

next chapters of the book of Daniel are understood in a way that glorifies and honors God. So that means we're going to talk about eschatology—the study of the last days, the last things.

I want you to know that since Jesus' ascension, Christians everywhere have been waiting for His return. It's not just something that churches and Christians believe in, but we see it in our world today. When you go grocery shopping, you'll see tabloid magazines that say, "End times have begun. Riots come as gas prices top \$6.00. Drought and plagues hit the U.S. Iran launches nuclear war." All these and much more prove the last days are here. Those things were written on June 11, 2007, yet we're still here. Gas prices never made it to \$6.00. We haven't had any massive droughts or plagues hit the U.S. Iran still does not have a nuclear weapon. But the world loves to speculate. Turn on the History Channel and you'll see Nostradamus does this or that. We love to speculate about the future.

Churches do this as well. In 2011, the most listened-to radio Bible teacher, on more stations than anyone else here in America, predicted that Jesus was going to come back on May 21st, 2011. Tens of thousands of his listeners sold all their possessions, bought RVs and went on an evangelistic journey to tell everybody that Jesus was coming back. The only remarkable thing that happened on May 21, 2011, was the Cubs beat the Red Sox. Jesus did not come. Would you believe the audacity of this guy? He was back on the radio on May 12th and people were still listening. To the very end, he was one of the most listened-to radio Bible teachers around. We love to talk about these things. We love to try to figure these things out.

This isn't just a recent phenomenon. Back in 1988, a book was written titled 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988. Four million copies were sold. 1988 came and went, and would you believe it? The author wrote another book titled The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989. Now, he didn't sell as many of those books, thank goodness.

We love to speculate about when Jesus is going to return. When we start reading the prophecies in the book of Daniel, many of us try to figure out: could we be living in this last generation? Could we in fact be the one generation that will see the coming of Jesus? Now with that speculation comes a lot of problems. You see, thousands of books have been written on this subject, tens of thousands of sermons have been preached about this, yet we've had failed predictions upon failed predictions.

Listen, nobody knows when the return of Christ is going to happen. Jesus said no one knows the hour or the day but His heavenly Father (Mark 13:32). So as we approach this, we need to recognize that we need to be charitable here. This is going to feel more like a college theology class than a Sunday morning sermon, but it's altogether necessary that we prepare our people. We know we need to, because we've already heard reports in our small groups—I think we have 75 small groups across the campuses—that some of this discussion is already beginning.

As I talk to a group this size, as I did in the other two services, I want to introduce you to some friends. Those in small groups were introduced to these friends in your study this last week. This is how we tend to approach the end times in different ways. Let me introduce some of them to you.

First of all, there's **Clueless Chloe**. She's ever-present and curious, seeking to understand, but she doesn't have a strong grasp of the topic yet. She says, "I've heard about the apocalypse and seen movies about it. But you're telling me the Bible actually teaches that? You're telling me that Jesus is in fact going to come back to earth?"

Maybe you've come and have enjoyed this first part of Daniel. You say, "I get it. Those are real-life stories, but now you're going to be talking about winged beasts? What are we to make of all of that?" You might be clueless and that's okay. We're glad to have you here.

Second is **Who-Cares Wilma**. Some of you are like, "I really don't care. Life is going really well for me. Work is great, the kids are great, marriage is great, money is great. Who cares? This is a great ride. I'm enjoying myself. To be honest with you, I don't really know what to make of all those prophecies and I really don't care."

Then there are a couple others. There's **Disbelieving Darla** who is just growing tired of waiting. She reads the papers, hears about all the fighting going on in our country and thinks, "Really? Is Jesus ever going to come back? I don't think so. It's been 2,000 years and we're in the same place. Nothing has changed. Some of you have given up hope."

Others of you are like **Scared Scarlett**. You're deeply devoted to Jesus, but you're scared. You're going to hear about things like the antichrist, tribulation, wars, famines, pestilences and all these horrific things the Bible talks about. These are scary chapters in the Bible and you're going to be filled with anxiety and fear.

Listen, that's not what God intended when He wrote these things. God shows you all these things, then He says, "I'm sovereign over every one of them. I'm in control. I have you in the palm of my hand. You don't need to fear. Your hearts do not need to be dismayed. I am with you always, even to the very end of the age, including the end times."

Then there's **Newspaper Ned**. We had some Newspaper Neds in small groups this week. I love you guys. You're awesome. You come in, you look at Bible prophecy, you watch National Treasure movies. You're like, "Okay, I've got the Bible and written in it is a secret code that's going to tell me when Jesus comes back. I've got to look at numbers, times and different things. I'm listening to people who can discern when the coming of Jesus is going to be. I'm going to tell you what the antichrist looks like, who he is and what he's all about. And usually he's part of the opposing political party."

Now, the best way to see this happened in 2016 when a whole bunch of preachers, especially a radio preacher from our area, was on a kick to preach a whole series of sermons, saying, "We are in the last days. I don't mean the 2,000 last days—I mean, like we're in it. It's happening. It's going to happen really, really soon. And here's why." This was his whole argument and he wasn't the only one: "The book of Revelation talks a lot about trumpets. And we have just elected a President named Trump." Okay, Trump, trumpets. But where's he going with this? Then he said, "But not just a President—a Vice President with the last name Pence. Trump-Pence. Trumpets. Let's close in prayer. Jesus is coming."

Holy moly, right? I mean, you can't make this stuff up. It's hilarious. Again, we already know you showed up to small groups. You came with your TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube videos. You're ready to show them. You've got a cousin who comes with you in your discussions named **Political Polly**. You follow Ned's lead. You're like, "We're going to figure this out." You live and die for end times.

This is the most important thing and you've been begging Pastor Tim for years, "We've got to preach about end times. You're a coward, Badal. Teach Revelation. You're dealing with Daniel. Come on. End times now and forevermore." Well, Political Polly has got to be really careful because she makes decisions about politics, about her worldview, about countries, so you have to be really, really careful.

Let me give you an example. Last fall, a war broke out between the Palestinians and the nation of Israel. In that, a lot of Christians went to the defense of Israel because of their doctrine. Their doctrine goes like this: "Israel now, as it was in the Old Testament, is God's people. Because of that, whatever the nation of Israel does—whether it's humane or not, it doesn't matter—they get to do because they're God's people. So they want to carpet-bomb Hamas, they want to carpet-bomb Gaza, they want to destroy everything in their way, and they're able to do it. Modern-day Israel is no different than Joshua and the people of Israel walking around the walls of Jericho. They have a mandate to do whatever they want at all costs.

Let me just say this. I know some of you will maybe disagree with me. Modern-day Israel is in a state of rebellion against God. They do not love Jesus. They do not love God. The Bible says they're rejecting God, so we need to be careful that we're not backing a pagan leadership because of a faulty understanding of the end times. Now, you can have your politics. You can have reasons why you believe Israel should be victorious, or why the Palestinians should be victorious. My hope and prayer is that all of us can say that we wish the bloodshed would end and there could be peace and tranquility in all parts of the world, including there.

We need to be careful that we don't allow our doctrine to lead us places that I don't think the Bible does. We need to know how to interpret certain passages of Scripture. So what I want us to get to today is to be like **Confident Carl**. He's a guy who's anchored in Scripture. He recognizes the danger of fixating on the future. He emphasizes what the Bible says over and over again which is the importance of living faithfully in the present, believing that a deepened relationship with Jesus outweighs the obsession of foreseeing future events. Carl doesn't forget the first part of Daniel when he gets into the second part of Daniel. He keeps that in mind.

So are we going to study some really amazing passages of Scripture in the weeks to come? At times are they going to scare us? They will. At times are they going to befuddle us? They will. At times we're going to sit there and just praise God—well, I hope we're doing that all the time—but we're going to be in awe of what God is going to do.

In the end, what God says is, "Leave the future to Me and be faithful. You stay true to Me." So to do that, let's look at five points that I want us to know and understand going forward. I'll try to move through them as quickly as possible.

The different approaches to various doctrines.

The first is that we need to recognize different approaches to various doctrines. As we deal with the doctrine of the end times, we have to ask the question: do we deal with all doctrines the same way? The answer is no. We do not hold all things at the same level. Write these things down, as they're going to be important for you. I want you to study them. I want you to make sure that what I'm saying is true.

Doctrines you would die for

The first thing you're going to do is have doctrines that you would die for. As Christians, there are certain beliefs that we will go to our graves for. Those should be few and far between, because if not, we're dying for a lot of things. One of the things that we would die for is that Jesus is God, that He's the Savior and Lord. Let's face it—if we're not willing to die for that, we don't have much hope in anything.

When it comes to eschatology, we have to believe that Jesus is coming back. Jesus said, "Behold, I am coming soon." He said to His disciples in John 14, "I go to prepare a place for you. Then when I'm done preparing that place, I'll come back to take you to be with Me forever." If that's not true, then Jesus is a liar. And if Jesus is a liar, the dominoes start to fall. Then He's not God. Then He can't save us. Then we are without hope. So there are certain things about the end times that we have to be willing to die for, including that Jesus is coming back.

Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, which includes us, all affirm that Jesus Christ will in fact come one day for His people. It's something we need to be willing to die for.

Doctrines we divide over

We may look at other Christians and say, "We agree on a lot, but there are things that make it hard for us to fellowship together." An example of this was in 1517 when Martin Luther looked at Roman Catholicism, of which he was a part, and said, "There's an issue that divides us—the doctrine of justification by faith alone." In his church at the time, Roman Catholicism told people that in order to go to heaven, they needed God to do some things, but they also needed to do things. It was justification by works. Martin Luther read the Bible in 1517 and said, "I don't see that," then his convictions divided the church in what we call the Protestant Reformation. We're the offspring of that Reformation. We're no longer Roman Catholics. We find ourselves in a different church. Protestants are those who protest certain doctrines of Catholicism.

Doctrines we discuss

This is where we're going to land for the next eight or nine weeks. These are things where Christians may disagree. I'm going to list a whole bunch of modern-day Bible teachers who disagree about how to approach the book of Daniel. These are men and women whose books I own, whose preaching and teaching I listen to. They're often people I look up to, but they will disagree with me and the other campus pastors interpreting the second half of the book of Daniel. I need to be fair to them because these are individuals I respect greatly, but we can still disagree.

Much of your end-times beliefs should be in the folder marked "Discussable." My personal opinion is that if you start dividing with others over end-times doctrines, you're probably taking yourself too seriously. Or you're taking a particular Bible teacher too seriously. Perhaps you're camping out on one certain portion of Scripture over the weight of other Scriptures.

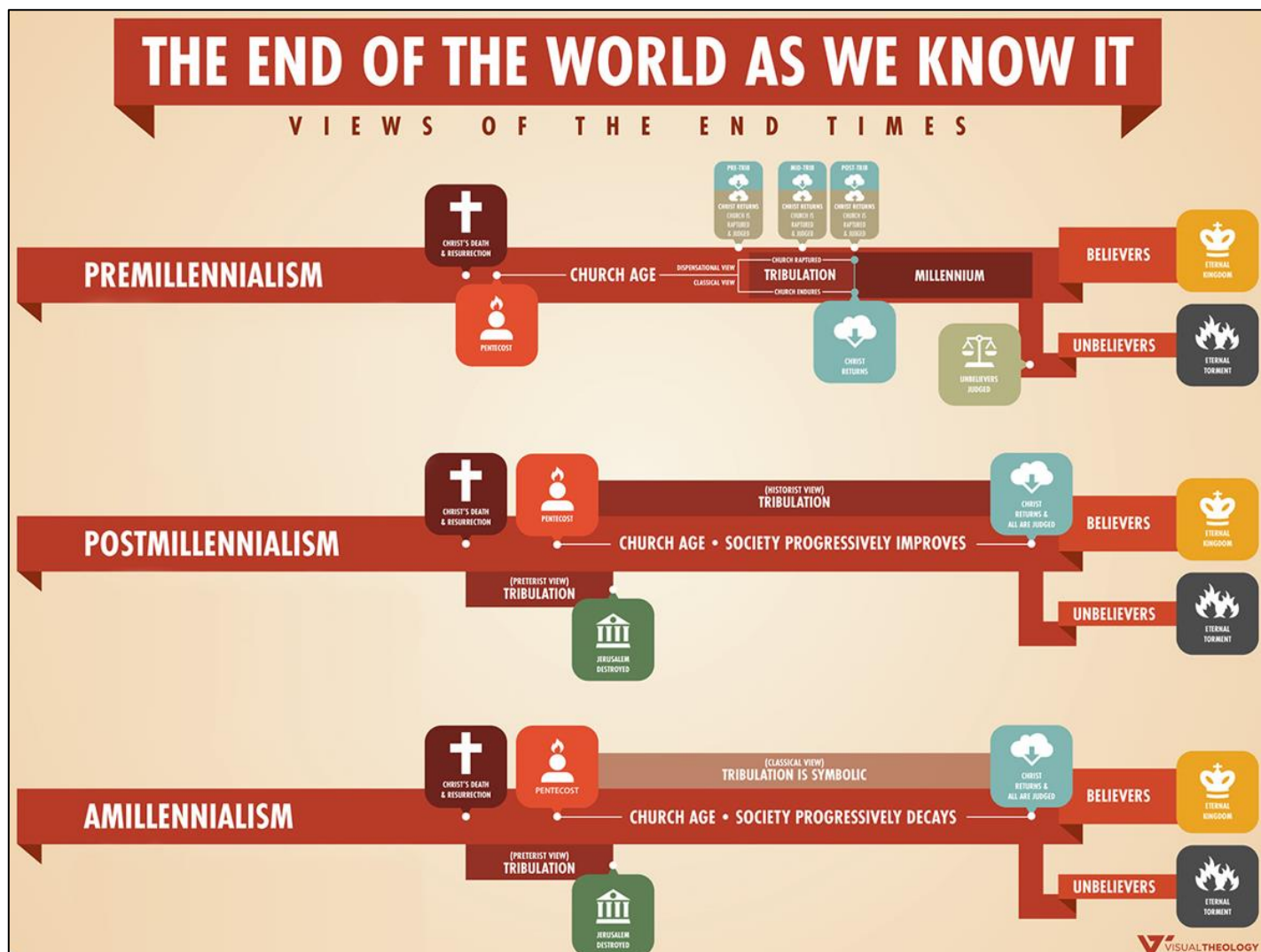
Doctrines we dump

In Titus 3:9, Paul tells Titus, *"But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless."* When anyone starts to define who the antichrist is, who the false prophet of Revelation is, who Babylon is, when the tribulation will come, when the rapture will take place, giving specific times and dates, dump it. It's not profitable. And everybody else who's done it up to this point has been wrong.

So we've got these doctrines we've got to figure out.

The diversity of opinions among Christians.

Within the debatable and discussable beliefs about eschatology, especially in the book of Daniel, we can approach it four different ways. I'm going to show you a chart that describes the last three views.



The idealist view

The first view on how to approach Daniel is that Bible teachers will look at the last part of Daniel and hold to the idealist interpretation. They see Daniel 7 through 12 as being kind of like Aesop's Fables. These are just figurative and metaphorical stories that teach a broader theme. Daniel isn't actually talking about events in the future; rather he's saying, "There's going to be kingdoms, chaos, and the sovereignty of God. That's the theme and here are some stories to illustrate it. We'll bring in some crazy-looking animals to help you understand these things. Stay faithful, stay close to God, then one day God will come back."

This is a minority view. Not many people believe it, but there were two individuals who made it pretty popular at one point. One of those was St. Augustine, a well-known church father in the fourth century, and Karl Barth, a theologian who wrote about 100 years ago. These men held that view, but we don't—and not many do in our day.

The preterist or postmillennial view

The second view is what we have represented in the middle section of the chart—the preterist view, also called postmillennialism. The preterist view is the belief that what Daniel is going to talk about is in fact the future for Daniel, but in the past for us. So these folks read Daniel 7 through 12 and believe it chronicles future events, future tribulations that will happen, but all of them were fulfilled by the end of the first century. They think Daniel prophesied about the coming of Jesus, then he prophesied about

the time after the Son of Man came, after the Messiah came, that there would be a turbulent time, a season of intense tribulation. The preterists believe that happened in A.D. 70. It's the green box in the middle section which represents the destruction of Jerusalem. About 40 years after Jesus ascended to heaven, there continued to be intense struggle between the Jewish people and the Roman empire. Rome finally grew tired of that. We see some of that with Pontius Pilate, Herod, and the chief priests, through all the politics that were taking place. But Rome finally had enough of all of Jerusalem's rebellion and chaos, so they sent in their famous general, who came in and absolutely decimated Jerusalem.

Jesus also prophesied about this, as we'll see in Mark 13, when He told the disciples that there would not be one stone left on top of another. This group believes that all of Daniel is lived out between Daniel's writing and A.D. 70, so now we're just living in the afterglow of all that. They also think that in fact what's going to happen is things are going to continue to get better and better until Jesus comes back.

By the way, the most well-known Bible scholar of our day for the preterist view, who recently passed away, was R.C. Sproul.

The amillennial view

Then there is another position, which is the most popular in historic Christianity—the historicist position, or the view at the bottom of the chart called amillennialism. Now, this position holds that all that is communicated in the last half of Daniel will in fact happen over the many centuries between Christ's ascension and His second coming.

So we have been living in this age when tribulation is going to happen. In essence, depending on where you live, you'll have good years and bad years. You'll have good decades and bad decades. You'll have good centuries and bad centuries. To put it in perspective, in the 20th century more people died in warfare than all other centuries combined. Does that tell you something? That's a bad century.

They talk about antichrist, believing there will be a lot of different antichrists. Nero was an antichrist in the Roman Empire. In modern days, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Mao Tse-tung were all dictators who showed us what these antichrists are like, but there's not one particular person. This group believes Christianity is going to grow and prosper. Things are going to get better, then Jesus Christ is going to come back. That's not the position we're going to take either.

The premillennial view

The final position is a futurist position. We believe that what we read about in Daniel was future to him and future to us. Regarding what was future to Daniel, he prophesied the first coming of Jesus. But future to us means that much of what Daniel writes still hasn't happened yet.

Now within this position, the top position on the chart, there are two other positions. On the top line of that top row, there are little boxes. We're living in the Church Age. I don't know where on that line we're at, but the top line is what's called Dispensational Premillennialism. Most of you, if you grew up in a Bible church, are probably Dispensational. I was Dispensational growing up. Our church has a history of Dispensationalism. It believes in what is called a pre-trib rapture, then there are offshoots from that. If this word resonates with you and you're thinking, "Now Pastor Tim is talking about me; now I know where I'm at," then you're a Dispensationalist. You might not have known it, you might not know how to spell it, but that's who you are.

The reason why is because a Dispensationalist separates Israel and the church. When you read the Bible, you've got to figure out, in the Old Testament or the New Testament, if God is talking about ethnic Israel or the church? So a Dispensationalist is going to read the book of Daniel and say, "That thing is for Israel" then a couple chapters later, "Okay, that's for the church." You have to be able to decide who you're going to ascribe certain Scriptures to.

Now, this position is held by lots of contemporary people. In fact, if you read the Left Behind books, they are in this camp. If you stood under the teaching of David Jeremiah, Charles Stanley, Tony Evans, Chuck Swindoll—guys I think very highly of—then you're listening to Dispensational theology.

Now, part of this futurist belief is also one that's on the lower line and is what we call Historic Premillennialism. That's going to be the position of this church.

The direction we take as a church

So how we're going to teach the book of Daniel is that Daniel does have a futuristic interpretation. There are things he will talk about that are still in the future. We believe there will be a tribulation. We believe there will be an antichrist coming. We believe that Christians are going to endure some hard times in the days to come. It's all in the future. The difference is we're not going to draw a hard and steadfast line on Israel and the church. We believe, because of Romans 9, 10 and 11, that the church and Israel in many ways have become one. They've been grafted together to be one people of God. The reason why we do that is it makes studying the Bible a whole lot easier. So if you've been part of a Dispensational church, when the book of Daniel comes up, it involves a lot of charts because there are a lot of moving parts in Dispensational theology.

What we're going to do is affirm the Historic Premillennial position. It's called Historic because the earliest church fathers seemingly affirmed it. Individuals like Charles Spurgeon, John Piper, Albert Mohler, James Montgomery Boyce, Alastair Begg, D.A. Carson, Mark Dever—all these men affirm this position.

Now, let me say this: I'm trying to slow down to be sure I communicate all I need to. While there's agreement that our teaching position is this as a church, we have members who will be all over the place. In our doctrinal statement, we do not hold a hard and fast line on how you have to interpret this. But the campus pastors and your elders all recognize that if we're going to be teaching this across six physical campuses with six different Bible teachers, we have to have a position that we agree on, so this is the position we affirm. Is it the right and only position? We don't know. But we have several reasons to affirm it.

First, the view you'll hear from us is a view that we'll teach with conviction, but we'll hold it with a charitable posture. We're not going to beat up our friends. We're not going to demonize and demagogue. I studied at Moody Bible Institute which does not affirm Historic Premillennialism. They're more Dispensational. I love that place; I'm thankful for that place. One of our own pastors and elders, Cisco Cotto, teaches there. These are our friends. We appreciate them and we're thankful for their hard work in evangelism. We're going to hold this charitably. Remember that, small groups. When people disagree, remember to be charitable.

Second, we teach this specific position because it's a consistent interpretation. In a moment we're going to open up Mark 13 and see that we don't have to come up with all kinds of maps and charts. We can just read the Bible and see what Jesus is saying about the end times, and it will seemingly make some real sense. We want it to be consistent. We don't want to make it harder. We have to remember that we're not the only ones who read these things—the ancient world was also reading it. What did they know and understand about it?

By the way, for the first 1,850 years, end times was not a big deal to Christians. They knew Jesus was coming back and that was enough. They were busy evangelizing the world and we want to be consistent with that example.

Third, we're going to teach this because we believe it's the best contingency plan. Let me explain. We're going to talk about airplanes (and I hope Josh isn't listening). Tomorrow, please pray for Pastor Keith and me. We're heading to Dallas where we're going to be teaching at some churches. So we have to get on a plane. We'll get on the plane, the pilots will be getting things ready, and a steward or stewardess is going to get on the microphone. They'll say, "Hey, it's 81 degrees and sunny in Dallas and we're looking for a safe and smooth flight. But here are a couple things we want to remind you about. When we're flying, if one of the wings falls off the plane...sorry Josh. Seriously, if something goes wrong, don't forget that your seat turns into a flotation device. Or maybe the cabin air pressure drops, then, we want you to know masks are going to fall from the ceiling. Put those on, then help one another do that. That will allow you to breathe." Now, are they saying, "Yep, this is the flight; we're going down"? No, they have every intention of getting us to our destination. And let's face it, we almost always get there. But they want us to be prepared for whatever comes.

Now, I know I'm speaking primarily to Dispensationalists, whether you know it or not. You're sitting there thinking, "Tim, the Bible teaches a pre-trib rapture, why do we need to worry about these things? I believe before any of this stuff happens, we're going to heaven. Jesus is coming and He's going to rapture us." Here's the thing. If you're right and I'm wrong, I'm high-fiving you on the way up. I'll own that in a heartbeat. But let me ask what if you're wrong? What if I preach, "Hey, guys, the book of Daniel doesn't really involve us, because we're going to be raptured to heaven." What if I'm wrong and we start going through some turbulent times? Then you're thinking, "Wait a minute. Weren't we supposed to be gone by now? Maybe we missed it."

What I want to do, and what we want to do as campus pastors, is make sure we have gone through all contingencies in case there isn't a pre-trib rapture. Historic Premillennialism believes in a post-trib rapture, which you'll hear in Mark 13, so we want you to be ready. We love you too much to pin your hopes on something that is a bit fuzzy in Scripture and we want to affirm the things the Bible says. The Bible says, "Live upright and holy lives until He comes." Be ready for it.

The description Jesus gives

We need to get the description now. I want you to turn to Mark 13 and see this. In Mark 13, we have the shortest, and the most precise, the most concise presentation of the end times given by Jesus. If anybody knows about the end times, it's Jesus. We also have the record of this discussion in Matthew 24-25. I'm going to give you an outline as we go, so you can see clearly how these events will unfold.

The past events of the first century.

¹ And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" ² And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Jesus is foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in the first century. We know that. He's prophesying about something that happened 40 years after he said it.

The present ebb and flow of human history.

³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" ⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. ⁷ And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet."

Remember that. Jesus just prophesied that the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed, but He also said, "That's not the end." When there are wars and rumors of wars, don't be surprised. It's not the end. He goes on.

⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

So for 20 centuries, we've seen this happening and maybe it will be another 20 centuries of wars and rumors of wars, pestilence, famines, earthquakes. He says these are just the beginning of the end. So what are we going to experience during that time? What is the Christian's part in this?

⁹ "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations."

Underline that. That hasn't happened yet. All the nations of the world have not had the gospel preached to them. That's why we give money to worldwide missions, because the four corners of the world have not heard the gospel. It's hard to believe that there are places like this, such New Guinea where the Hattons are proclaiming Jesus to an unreached people group. This is still in the future.

Jesus goes on:

¹¹ And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

You're thinking, "That's not happening here in America." But it's happening in other places and it's happened throughout history. If you stand for Christ, your whole family will turn you in.

A future tribulation is going to come.

Then someone else shows up in verse 14—the antichrist.

¹⁴ "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand)."

Why does the reader need to understand this? Because He's using a symbol: "*the abomination of desolation*." Notice what He says next: "*where he...*" It's a person. There's a person coming who will be the antichrist. He will be antithetical to all Christ is and will

seek to destroy the people of God. He will prop himself up as a worldwide leader, as a savior, as a messiah. He will say unspeakable things—that he is the one—and the world will believe him.

So we have this personification of evil, then for seven years this guy will rule and reign. It will seem as if he is the answer the world has been looking for. The visibility of the antichrist ushers in a time of great emergency.

^{14b} Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, ¹⁶ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁷ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!

Jesus is feeling sorry for the women of the day who have to care for young children because it's going to be a time of great turbulence. *"Pray that it doesn't happen in winter."* Why? Because there's a good chance we won't have homes. We'll live in places we never thought we would live in.

¹⁹ For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.

²⁰ And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect...

Wait a minute. I thought we were going to be raptured before the tribulation. It seems as if Jesus says we're going to go through it.

^{20b} But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. ²² For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

We have a promised expectation.

²⁴ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

²⁷ And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The design for the days ahead

Listen to me, church. At the end of all this is the greatest thing we will ever experience, so Jesus gives us a description. We don't have to sit there and make a lot of fuss about this; it's right there in black and white, or red in some of your Bibles. What does it lead to? What's God's design for all of this? What am I hoping we will accomplish in the book of Daniel? Let me give you an outline.

1. To inform you about what the future holds. The apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians, "I do not want you to be uninformed."
2. To promote hope amidst grief and trouble. These days will be difficult, but Paul says, "Comfort each other with these words." Eschatology should comfort, not bring you anxiety.
3. To point to God's sovereignty. God is in control. Listen, Jesus said, "Take heart. I've told you these things already."
4. To put eternity in our hearts. Some of us aren't even thinking about eternity. We're thinking about tomorrow or we're thinking about how good life is. But there is a day coming when all of this will be burned.
5. To produce in us a heart for evangelism. There's a day coming when it will be too late for people to come to know Jesus. If your eschatology is not pushing to proclaim the good news of Jesus, you don't have a good theology and a good eschatology.

We need to trust God. We need to be on the move. We need to tell people about Jesus—and that's where we're going to go in the days to come in the book of Daniel. It's going to be fun. It's going to be mysterious. It's going to cover a whole lot of hard texts. But I'm going to do the best I can to lead us through these waters and hopefully God will receive great glory as a result. Amen?