

Warnings to Teachers

By Bob Vincent

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: James 3:1-2; Luke 24:13-24

Preached on: Sunday, April 7, 2024

Trinity Presbyterian Church

2623 N Robison Road

Texarkana, TX 75501

Website: www.rbvincent.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent

From the letter of James. James was the half-brother of Jesus, and so this is James chapter 3, and we'll read the first two verses there on page 1883.

But not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. (James 3:1-2)

The word of the Lord. ["Thanks be to God."]

May we pray.

Lord, help me in a very practical way to apply this scripture to us this day, and particularly, Lord, in a time when there is wild speculation. Help us, O Lord, we pray, to understand your word and the principles thereof. For Jesus' sake, amen.

This is a striking passage of scripture.

A couple of people played a practical joke on me six days ago on April Fool's Day, and I was fooled. Someone wrote me with an email purportedly from Pakistan and told me how offended they were when I put down the people of Pakistan and without any kind of elaboration on the Bengali people and all of this.

And so I wrote back to this person, and I apologized. And then I get an email back that thanked me that my heart was in the right place, even though I was ignorant, being a white, Southern, privileged, Christian male.

Now I should have picked up on that, and what I did was to send out an email last Monday, April Fool's Day, and said, "Please pray for me." Now I want you to reflect with me for a moment.

And because of that, I decided to preach out of James 3 today. "Not many of you should presume to be teachers," he says, "because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." Now even though that was a practical joke, and as I researched on Sermon Audio, and I sent a picture in my email to you of the 5,000 some odd downloads that we've had from January the 2nd until April Fool's Day, that none of those 5,000 plus downloads were from Pakistan.

They were from Saudi Arabia, they were from other places, but none from Pakistan. So in my in my bizarre brain, I started speculating how that could be, and I figured he had to be an IT person who knew how to bypass. These things, and I knew, because you remember General Betrayus, which the "P" and the "B" in Arabic are identical sounds, General Petraeus had this lady friend (Paula Broadwell), and what they did was to use Gmail, and they simply never sent the email to each other.

They both had the password, and they would go in there and open it up, and he would write to her and save it, and then she would open it and write her part and save it in that way. This United States General never got caught for shenanigans, and it's because you can do that with Gmail. If you've got a password, you just open up, and it never goes through the Internet.

So I'm speculating. With all this, all this information in this poor brain of mine going through and thinking, how, my gracious! I offended this man.

So here's an issue that for me is a huge issue. I don't want ever to offend anyone over anything, except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). That's critical. And so I went to great lengths and I spent an enormous amount of time trying to figure this out and write to this person until finally this person sent me, Monday evening, an email saying, "April Fools."

But in the providence of God, it's brought us to our text, which I think is such an important text, For today, in as much as, (Whoops! Say, would you like to get, instead of roping a cow, would you like to give me my glasses? Can you get me those glasses right there? Your granddad will do it.) Because that's what I wanted to mention. Because we are very close to the 100% passing over of the solar eclipse. And you want to wear glasses like these, which are just about the same as

welding glasses, because you don't want to look at the sun if it's overcast. So I brought these as a prop. Because there are a lot of people speculating.

We had this big earthquake near New York City. and buildings shaking. And earlier we've had the big earthquake in Taiwan with a ring of fire.

And so people are beginning to think, well what is going on? These must be signs of the Lord's return.

Would you hold your hand there at James and flip over to Matthew chapter 24, page 1538. And so Look at this on verse 4. Matthew 24 verse 4:

Watch out that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name claiming I am the Christ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pangs. (Matthew 24:4-8)

Now, people read that, and they fail to understand that all of that was literally fulfilled within the lifetime of those who heard Jesus speak. You ever thought about that? All of these things happened in the lifetime of those who heard Jesus speak. That doesn't mean that they don't continue on, they do. Prophecy recapitulates. But we have eyewitness accounts of these things that occurred in the first century. earthquakes and signs in the heavens, and if you ever bother reading that which I labor over for many hours, namely the transcript where I document everything that I say, you'll see in there is an extensive quote from the eyewitness of the destruction of Jerusalem, Flavius Josephus, who was a Jewish general commanding the armies of the Galilee, and he writes about all these things, including signs and wonders and voices in the heavens and chariots being seen.

War 6:288 (6.5.3) Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit, to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. 289 (6.5.3) **Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year.** 290 (6.5.3) Thus also, before the Jews'

rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and **at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour.** 291 (6.5.3) This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. 292 (6.5.3) **At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple.** 293 (6.5.3) Moreover, **the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple,** which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, **was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night.** 294 (6.5.3) Now, those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty, was able to shut the gate again. 295 (6.5.3) This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. **But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies.** 296 (6.5.3) So these publicly declared, that this signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius [Jyar], 297 (6.5.3) a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, 298 (6.5.3) and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, **before sunset, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen 299 (6.5.3) running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, 300 (6.5.3) and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence."** But, what is still more terrible there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began,

and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for everyone to make tabernacles to God in the temple, 301 (6.5.3) began on a sudden cry aloud, **“A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!”** This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city. 302 (6.5.3) However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried before. 303 (6.5.3) Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator; 304 (6.5.3) where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, **“Woe, woe to Jerusalem!”** 305 (6.5.3) And when Albinus (for he was then our procurator) asked him who he was, and whence he came, and why he uttered such words; he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancholy ditty, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him. 306 (6.5.3) Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, **“Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!”** 307 (6.5.3) Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come. 308 (6.5.3) **This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased; 309 (6.5.3) for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, “Woe, woe, to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!” And just as he added at the last,—“Woe, woe, to myself also!”** there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him,

and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost.

War 6:310 (6.5.4) Now, if any one consider these things, he will find that God takes care of mankind, and by all ways possible foreshows to our race what is for their preservation; but that men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves; 311 (6.5.4) for the Jews by demolishing the tower of Antonia, had made their temple foursquare, while at the same time they had it written in their sacred oracles,—“That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should become foursquare.” 312 (6.5.4) But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, “about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.” 313 (6.5.4) The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now, this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. 314 (6.5.4) However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. 315 (6.5.4) But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure; and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city, and their own destruction. (Flavius Josephus (1970), *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5, *Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), pp. 582-83, emphases mine)

These are reminiscent of Ezekiel’s prophecy, where the Lord himself leaves his temple, the temple built by Solomon, and goes away. because he has turned it over to the Gentiles and it was destroyed in 586 BC.

Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD’S house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. (Ezekiel 10:18-19)

The point I want to make is this. These are things that always happen throughout history, and they should warn us about several things.

Number one, they are a sign. What is an earthquake a sign of? What are signs in the heavens a sign of?

They are signs of this, that the world is not going to continue on always the way that it is. That's the great error. The world will one day face cataclysmic trouble and will be destroyed not by a flood of water but by a flood of fire (2 Peter 3:5-7, 10-13). And that's very plain so these are things that happen throughout time the point I want to say about earthquakes whether in Nationalist China, as it used to be called before they were knifed in the back by Richard Nixon, or whether it occurred in New York City in the past week here—what are they a sign of?

They're a sign that the God who is, will intervene in real time and real space and judge this world. They're signposts of coming judgment.

But what does that mean? It doesn't mean that they're signposts that the judgment is about to happen.

(A deliberately absurd example follows)

As if, well, now during the eclipse tomorrow, you know that Joe Biden and Donald Trump are engaged, going to engage in a sword fight, and in the process, Joe Biden is going—his sword is going to go through Kamala Harris' heart. She's going to drop dead. And then Donald Trump will pierce Joe Biden's heart with his sword, and then the secret service will kill him, and then Louisiana's own Mike Johnson will become President of the United States. It's going to happen. It's going to happen during the eclipse tomorrow.

And all I want to say to you is this, the kind of speculation that you get on the Internet and sometimes by radio and TV preachers is **as absurd as that**.

Of course, that's—It could happen—but what is it a sign of?

It's a sign that one day God is going to finally and definitively intervene in our world, and every earthquake and every sign in the heavens is a signpost saying that the world will not always continue on the way it is, **but it's not telling us when**.

In fact, Jesus explicitly says here in Matthew 24, "Don't let anybody deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). Verse six: "You'll hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it you're not alarmed" (Matthew 24:6)

Don't be alarmed over the eclipse tomorrow. Just be sure and wear special glasses. But don't be alarmed. Am I expecting some bizarre thing to happen tomorrow? No, I'm not.

But I do remember this, "In a time you think not" (Matthew 24:44). So what I'm saying is: These astronomical phenomena, are a sign that the Lord will return, that the Lord will return in judgment. But they are not a signpost **when**. And as you read on down, and he calls this, he says, "There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pangs" (Matthew 24:7-8).

What does he mean by that? Well, you know, if you've ever been present or if you've ever gone into labor, I've never gone into labor, but I was present at the birth of four of my five children. My second daughter was just too fast. And I was present at the birth of one of my grandchildren. So if you've ever been present at birth, you know that this is coming.

You have these warnings, you have these contractions, and that's what Jesus is using this as an illustration. When you have these earthquakes, when you have these astronomical phenomena, they're a sign there's going to be a birth coming, and that birth is the birth of a new world order, not brought in by politicians who make promises and break them but a new world order brought in by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, initially in the coming of the Holy Spirit in 30 A.D., and in a special way in 70 A.D., when the Jewish temple was destroyed and the old system passed away, but in a very final and ultimate way when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, **because his return is still future**. So he says, don't get alarmed. "These things are the beginning of birth pangs" (Matthew 24:8).

And he goes on and talks about wickedness increasing, he talks about being hated because of Jesus, and he gives them a sign.

Now look at verse 15.

So when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through Daniel the prophet—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Matthew 24:15-16)

Now, what is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet? Notice what he says there. "Let the reader understand." It says, wait a minute, stop and think about this. What is this saying? And if you turn over to Luke chapter 21,

where this is written, not for a Jewish audience, but for a Gentile audience, if you look at Luke chapter 21, Verse 17 of Luke 21, page 1635.

All men will hate you because of me, but not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm, you will gain life. (And then turning the page), when you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, then you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Luke 21:17-21)

So the point that Jesus is making is this.

These signs in the heavens, these signs on earth, earthquakes, famines, plagues, all these things are the beginning of birth pangs.

Was there a definitive sign that people would be given, that they would know they had to do something? The answer to that is, “Yes.” It’s when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. “Let the reader understand.” Notice in Luke 21:20, there is no let the reader understand.

He’s saying explicitly what Christ said implicitly. He’s saying when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, he said, then get out of town. Don’t go back in there. Don’t get anything out of there. And notice what happens. He says in verse 21:

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:21-24)

What is he saying? He’s saying that something was going to happen, and it actually literally did. In AD 66, the Jewish people revolted against the Roman government, and the end result was that the Roman Empire came against the Jewish people in this war that lasted from AD 66 to AD 70—came against them with great ferocity, and a million people died. And others were taken into slavery, into captivity. The Jewish people suffered amazing things in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.

70, and then again with the fall of Masada. And never again was the temple rebuilt. Never again.

Why? Because we have the Mosque of Omar there. We have the Dome of the Rock, where, as I mentioned last Lord's Day, supposedly Muhammad's horse, *al-Baruq*, put a hoofprint when he rode Muhammad from Mecca to heaven, decided to stop off at Jerusalem and leave a hoofprint. And that's what Muslims believe.

It's the third holiest site in Islam. Will the temple be rebuilt? No, it will not be rebuilt. If anyone attempts to rebuild that temple, what will happen will be similar to what happened under the revolt of Simon bar Kokhba.

That's when Jerusalem was plowed under and sowed with salt (It was plowed under, but not sowed with salt.) God will not allow that temple to be rebuilt. And so when people start thinking, well, this is going to happen, this is going to, and then this is going to, and that, it's already been fulfilled, but that doesn't exhaust it.

There's recapitulation of prophecy. There's trouble. And every time we see an earthquake, every time we experience it—I only experienced an earthquake once when Sandy and I were in Alaska on a tour, and we stopped and I was standing in the bathroom and all of a sudden, I felt the floor shake, and I thought, whoa, what's going on? It was a little earthquake.

And that's nothing like what happened on the island of Formosa or Nationalist China or Taiwan. That's nothing compared to that. It's nothing like what happened in the greater New York area this past week. What does it mean? It means there's a signpost.

The signpost says, "The Lord is going to return." When? We don't know, but you better be ready. That's what it's a signpost of.

So these are things that happen, and they're warnings. Looking at this, we need to be careful, particularly of speculative preachers, because nothing sells like fortune-telling. What do I mean? If you look at James chapter 3, he says:

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

Fortune-telling really sells. People like to read “horror” scopes, horoscopes. People want to know what’s going to happen. And in speculation, people are just, have a craven, pathological desire to know what’s going to happen tomorrow.

What’s going to happen tomorrow? Well, unless I’m wrong, and I could be, and the Lord could return, I could be wrong, and Mike Johnson might become our new President tomorrow. I could be wrong. But unless I’m wrong, what’s going to happen tomorrow is we’ll have a solar eclipse, and people who have traveled up here in order to go over to Oklahoma. Or my two sons and their families who are camping in one of those beautiful Arkansas campgrounds right underneath where the eclipse is to go.

And they texted me this morning that they followed the Scout method and had their devotional around the campfire. So I’ve got two sons and a bunch of grandkids and a daughter-in-law camping to watch the eclipse tomorrow.

What’s going to happen tomorrow? Tomorrow will be a day like any other day. But is it a sign? Of course, it’s a sign. Every astronomical phenomenon is a sign **that** the Lord will deal with this world in judgment.

Now he says:

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

And I pondered that particularly in light of my biting the baited hook that I had offended someone in Pakistan because in a gloss where I talked about the poverty of Bangladesh as over against the poverty of Pakistan, this person purported to be terribly offended and insulted and I bit the hook.

So as I preach, as I teach, I want to stick to the Bible. I don’t want to teach in a way that is drawing people in. You know, we could build this church very fast if I were willing to lie and deceive people.

Do you really believe that? I really believe that. If you tell people what they want, if you tell them just smooth things, and particularly if you preach sensationalist sermons, “I’m going to explain to you how tomorrow all this is going to happen.”

That sells things. It’s like the nonsense of the man that wrote the book about September 11th. And did he hit on some interesting things? Yes, they were

interesting. They were interesting, and the exact quote that some congressmen and senators made in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attack—we will rebuild with cedars and so on.

The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with dressed stone;
the fig trees have been felled, but we will replace them with cedars.
(Isaiah 9:10)

Prophecy recapitulates. Prophecy recapitulates. And it's just amazing that we have people who serve in the Congress who are that ignorant of what the Bible says. We live in an era of incredible ignorance of the Bible.

I want to be a student of one book. I want to know this book. I want it to pour out of my veins the same way that when I used to preach on the street corners of Asheville, North Carolina in the one place they let us go, which was the Wino District, when you came up on some of these people, you could smell the alcohol and sour sweat coming out of their pores.

I want the Bible to come out of my pores. I want to be so imbued with written Scripture that it flows into everything that I do and say and think.

And so I promise you as your pastor, as you pray for me, pray that I will always be a man of the book, that I will expound scripture and scripture alone. And why is that? It says because you know we who teach will be judged more strictly.

I want of every single sermon I preach for the Lord to pass judgment on it and say, "Bob, you stuck to the word."

And when I speculate to say, "Well, this is a speculation that's over against, this is what the Bible actually literally says."

And notice, he says:

We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.
(James 3:2)

And then he goes through a number of illustrations about bridling horses. and how a little rudder can control a huge ship, and he said: "But no man can tame the tongue" (James 3:8).

And I have got to tell you, I have got to tell you, I have got to tell you, no matter how many times I've been convicted because of sarcasm, or speaking gruffly, or being critical, or what have you, no matter how much I resolve and say, "Lord, Please help me never to ever speak like that again . . ."

One day it dawned on me that when we used to have a dog, I spoke better to the dog than I did to Sandy. What do I mean?

Well, the dog didn't understand what I was saying. He only understood the tone of voice. But when I'm dealing with somebody that I will have been married to for this coming July, 56 years, You know, I'm not always careful how I say what I say. And contrary to feminine opinion, neither does she.

We sometimes speak as a matter-of-fact way. You know what I'm talking about. And that kind of thing.

But with the dog, when we had our dogs, Ralphie and Hamilton, I always had to say things in a way, if I wanted that dog to come to me, "Come on, come on over here, good dog. Come over here." And grab them by the collar. And you speak tenderly and softly. And I'm simply saying, no matter how many times I try, to deal with my tongue, this thing gets me in trouble over and over and over again because the tongue no one can tame.

And then he says something across the page that I think is important. And he says in verse 13:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, and of the devil. (James 3:13-15)

And that's the world of flesh and the devil. It's of this earth. It's worldly. He says it's unspiritual. Literally, it's soulish (psuchikós, ψυχικός). It has to do with the human soul (psuché, ψυχή).

And it's interesting the difference between *pneuma*, spirit (πνεύμα, πνεῦμα), and *psyche*, soul (psuché, ψυχή). They're synonyms, but they're not identical.

So the wisdom of this world is soulish as over against Spiritual (from the Holy Spirit). And it's of the devil.

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. (James 3:16-17)

He says.

I want a wise tongue. Pray for me that whenever I open my mouth, particularly when I teach, that my tongue may be full of wisdom, wisdom that comes from true humility. Wisdom that is easy to be entreated. Wisdom that doesn't delight in argumentation. And he says, they that sow in peace: "Peacemakers sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:18)

Now while we're there, I want you just to take a moment and turn to the left for a quick second. to the book of Hebrews chapter 13 Hebrews chapter 13 and it's the burden of being a teacher and listen to what he says here this on page 1879, and he says in verse 17:

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. (Hebrews 13:17)

What I try to remember whenever I preach is this: I will give an account to God for what I've said. And that's why very few people should be teachers. Because a teacher needs to immerse himself in the written Word and master the written Word so that the written Word masters him.

And how do we rule? How do we have authority? We do that by means of the Word.

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be with joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

And he says here something that's very, very striking. Look across the page at verse 9: "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings." (Hebrews 13:9)

Never in the history of humanity have more strange teachings been available to more gullible people than they are right now. The internet has produced people who have a degree in Googl-ology, who can explain to our dear friend, Lynn Reep—I don't know where he is today—can explain to Doctor Reep, how much more they understand of medicine with their degree in Google than he has with a degree in medicine.

We've never lived in an era of more experts on more nonsense than we have today.

And so he says:

Do not be carried away with all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. (Hebrews 13:9)

And that's an interesting thing. Pray for me. I need prayer.

I need prayer during the week as I prepare sermons, as I try to reflect on, "God, what do you want me to preach on this Sunday?" And I do plan to preach on Asa, as I pick back up "Bible Characters," God willing, next Lord's Day.

But today I just wanted to focus on the agony and the ecstasy of preaching. The agony of preaching: I had a friend one time who said to me, because I did not stand in the pulpit until it was time to preach, he came to me one time, and he said, "Bob, I watch you and you appear always so incredibly nervous before you preach."

And I said to my friend, "Ham, if I'm ever no longer nervous, I'm no longer called to preach." That's the agony of preaching. The agony of preaching is making sure that I have a message from God. The message that God has for specific people on a specific day. And making sure that I deliver it as best as I can, as true to Scripture as I can, as based on the Bible as I can. Because to stand in this place, in this position, is an awesome task. I have to give an account. I'm responsible.

And the whole of church history, especially for the last 1700 years, is a testimony of how those who came to have leadership positions in the church could not have

cared less about being true to the Bible. They used their positions to extract money from people, to con them, to get this done and that done.

Pray for me. Pray for me to hear from God as I work my way through the Bible. Pray for God to speak to me in such a way that I know for sure this is where I need to go this Sunday.

And the April Fool joke gave me that because I don't want to ever offend anyone over my particular, weird political views that are probably different than everybody else's in the world. That's not relevant.

In the final analysis, who wins in 2024 election isn't ultimately—the fate of the world isn't hanging on this election.

“Oh, but it is, it is, it is.” That's what I'm being told constantly. I can't believe the amount of emails I get from Democrats and Republicans, telling me and addressing me as friend. “Friend, are you still with us?” This kind of thing.

And the wives and husbands of candidates writing to me wanting money. “The whole fate of the world hangs on this election, don't you know, Bob?”

No, it doesn't. You know what the fate of the whole world hangs on? Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Because He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And it may be God's will to put us under the yoke of a foreign government that we might learn what it is to serve the Lord as over against serving people (2 Chronicles 12:8).

You never know what God's secret will is. You can only know what the revealed will is.

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. (Deuteronomy 29:29)

And God sometimes ordains terrible calamities so that people will say, “There's nothing that this world affords me that's worth having. I need to seek God.”

Because that's God's purpose in history, as Paul says at Mars Hill in Acts 17. He's arranged the times and the seasons and the boundaries of the nations so that men and women and boys and girls would turn to him and seek him.

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:26-27)

So the eclipse, God willing, will occur tomorrow sometime around one o'clock in the afternoon and going on for a couple of hours, but only about four minutes of the most intense part of it. I assume that will happen. But what is ultimately that pointing to?

One day. One day the trumpet will sound. One day the Lord Jesus Christ will descend from heaven with a shout. One day the dead in Christ will rise. And one day you and I, if we're alive when he returns, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

And so if you're watching on the Internet, as we do know roughly over the past three months, 5,000 plus people around the world have watched these, I appeal to you.

Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Rather than getting caught up in strange teachings and this and that and how this astronomical event and this shaking of the earth here is a definite sign that this is about to happen.

Be warned of this, all these kinds of calamities are signposts that one day, God will intervene, but they don't tell us exactly when that will be. And so my word to you is this. Be ready, be ready now, make your peace with God now. Do you know that this very day, the seventh day of April in the year of our Lord 2024, that today you can know for sure you're going to heaven?

Have you ever come to that point where you turn from your sins, and you cast yourself on God's mercy in Christ? If you've never done that, do that and ask the

Lord Jesus to come inside of you and to change you, and trust only in what He's done for you and not what you can do for Him.

Trust in Christ, for today is the day of salvation. May we pray.

Lord, we pray that you will take these thoughts as we deal with speculations and false teachers who alarm people this way and that way, with sure and certain this is going to happen.

Lord, may we resist the speculations, and may we ground our lives on Christ, the solid rock. because he is the solid rock, and all other ground is sinking sand.

In Jesus' name, amen.