

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 042

Matthew 24:13

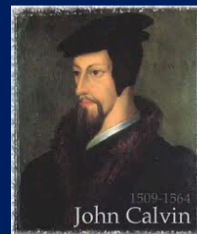
September 14, 2025

Dr. Andy Woods

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Matthew 24:13. We are continuing, in Sunday School, our look at Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible.

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

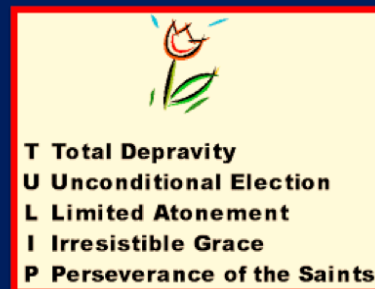
- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. **TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture**
- VI. Conclusion



We are in that section of the study when we are dealing with TULIP. And right now, we are just looking at the "P," the Perseverance of the Saints.

V. Running **TULIP** Through the Grid of Scripture

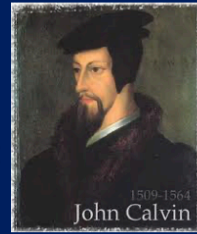
- A. **T**otal Depravity
- B. **U**nconditional Election
- C. **L**imited Atonement
- D. **I**rresistible Grace
- E. **P**erseverance of the Saints



What does Neo-Calvinism say about the Perseverance of the Saints? What does the Bible say about the Perseverance of the Saints? That is the subject that we are getting to.

E. Perseverance of the Saints

1. Calvinistic definition
2. Examples
3. Problems with the Calvinistic understanding



Sugar Land Bible Church, as I have tried to say a number of times, does not teach the Perseverance of the Saints concept. We teach the preservation of the saints. First Peter 1:5 says that we as God's people are currently being

"...protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

So we are on a fast track to glory. Doesn't that make you feel better about things? And you are going to get there because God is protecting you (1 Peter 1:5).

That understanding is very different from the Perseverance of the Saints.

"'P' [in Calvinism] stands for 'Perseverance of the Saints.' This is what Calvinists say gives them the assurance of eternal security, but in actuality 'the emphasis is upon the believer's faithfulness in persevering—not upon God's keeping power...uncertainty as to one's ultimate salvation is, in fact, built into the very fabric of Calvinism itself.'"¹

That is a quote from Bob Kirkland in his analysis of Calvinism.

The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints means that if you really are one of the elect and you have been given the gift of faith, then what is going to happen in your life is that you are going to always, with very few exceptions, be on an upward ascent.

You will persevere in good works and doctrine, which means that you will always be looking at yourself and looking at other people. And you really do not know if you are one of the elect until you get to the end of your life and figure out if you have persevered enough. Now, if you believe that—and this is what is taught around the clock in Neo-Calvinism—then you really can have no assurance that you are on your way to heaven,

¹ Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.

right? Because there are all these question marks in your mind: "Have I done enough? Have I worked hard enough? Is there enough Christ-likeness in my life?"

If you have a season of backsliding, or if the pattern of your life is more backslidden than not backslidden, then the Calvinists will say you have every right to question whether you are really one of the elect, because you are not persevering.

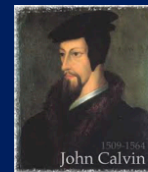
This is something that John Calvin himself taught. He said in the first sentence from his work "God's Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence,"

"[T]hose who do not persevere unto the end belong not to the calling of God."²

So that is what Calvinists mean by the Perseverance of the Saints. What we have been studying recently is the problems with that—why that is an unbiblical belief system.

3. Problems with the Calvinistic Perseverance Definition

- a) Final salvation is unbiblical
- b) Scriptural examples of non-persevering saints
- c) **Support only found in out of context verses (Luke 4:9-12)**
- d) Subtle form of works salvation
- e) Preferability of immediate death following conversion?
- f) Lessens the importance of practical sanctification
- g) Lessens the importance of the Bema Seat warnings
- h) Destroys the assurance of salvation



So in subletter "a," we talked about how the concept of final salvation is unbiblical. We are starting to hear more and more from Neo-Calvinism about final salvation.

I gave you the quotes where they use this expression "final salvation." By "final salvation," the Calvinists mean that justification is not determined on the front end. You trust Christ, well, big deal.

You do not really know if you are saved at that point of trust, until enough good works show up in your life to prove that you are one of the elect. And then you get to the very end of your life, and there is some kind of final judgment. And it is at that final judgment point that God, or Jesus, says to you, "You are saved. I know you are saved because there are enough good works in your life to prove that you are one of the elect."

² John Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism: God's Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence* (Reformed Free Publishing Association, Kindle edition from the 2009 2nd edition), Kindle location 532.

That is very, very different from what you find in the Bible. The Bible teaches no such doctrine. What the Bible says is that you can be immediately assured of your salvation, the moment you trust Christ as your Savior.

And if you have truly trusted Christ as your Savior, your eternal destination is really not affected by how the rest of your life turns out, because God made you a promise that you are justified before Him at the point of faith alone in Christ alone.

Now, when people talk like this, you know, people get real nervous and say, "Well, you are teaching licentiousness. You are teaching antinomianism."

And I do not believe that is what we are teaching. Decisions that you make as a Christian have an eternal impact in terms of rewards, or lack thereof, at the Bema Seat Judgment. But your works do not have anything to do with whether you are justified, because justification has to do with birth. Sanctification has to do with growth. And those are two different things entirely.

Just like in the natural world, you could have someone born who is not developing right. And you do not go up to the person and say, "Well, I guess you are not born." Well, they were born, but they are just not developing the way they could. That is the difference between being an obstetrician, who helps with the birthing process, and a pediatrician, who helps with the growth process.

So in the natural world, you can have developmental problems in people who are born, and yet are not maturing correctly through bad nutrition or whatever the issue might be. But no one is going to look at the person and say, "They were not born."

If you can capture that, that is what you have in the body of Christ. You can have people who are born again—I have given you many examples of it—but are not developing spiritually the way they should.

So this whole idea that salvation is determined at the end of salvation rather than at the beginning of salvation is just an idea that is fanciful. The Bible does not teach that.

Abraham was justified the moment he believed (Genesis 15:6). And when you go from there to Genesis 16, the guy messed up a bunch of stuff, right? So when Abraham messed up a bunch of stuff and impregnated Hagar in Genesis 16, that does not erase what happened in Genesis 15.

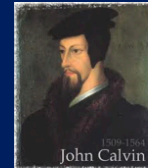
The way we teach these is that these are three separate phases of salvation: justification, sanctification (or growth), and then one day, glorification. So the test for a Christian is "Are you growing properly?" not "Are you a Christian?" Salvation is determined by God. It is announced on the front end by way of divine promise the moment you trust Christ. It is not a "wait and see" thing.

So we saw that final salvation is unbiblical. I showed you seven examples of Old Testament people and ten examples of New Testament people who were clearly saved but were not persevering in good works at the end of their lives. In fact, the opposite was happening.

So we left that discussion. And what we want to move into now is subletter "c," criticizing, or critiquing, this Perseverance of the Saints idea, trying to show you that the support for that teaching is found in verses that are ripped completely and totally out of their context.

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You will notice that I have underlined there and in parentheses Luke 4:9-12. Luke 4:9-12 is where Jesus had quoted Scripture to Satan, and Satan quoted the Scripture back to Jesus.

Isn't that interesting? Jesus, in the Judean wilderness, was tested three times by the adversary. He responded each time with a Scriptural citation.

Well, then Satan said, "I can get into the Scripture quoting business." And he quoted Psalm 91:11-12. He completely annihilated the context of it and made it sound like Jesus should test God by intentionally throwing Himself from the temple (Luke 4:9-11, paraphrase).

"Because after all, Psalm 91:11-12 says, "'The angels will catch you and protect you,' so test it out" (Luke 4:9-11, paraphrase). And that is where Jesus responded with another citation from Deuteronomy: "'Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the test'" (Luke 4:12, paraphrase; citing Deuteronomy 6:16).

The reason I bring that up is that just the fact that someone is quoting the Bible—and everybody does—does not mean that they are quoting the Bible correctly. So when someone quotes the Bible, you should not be overly impressed with that, because the devil quotes the Bible. You have to ask yourself, as a good Berean (Acts 17:11), "Are they using the Bible properly?" "Are they using the Bible correctly?"

You look at some of the really well-known heretics on TV—Kenneth Copeland and all of these people who teach that we are little gods and are entitled to this life of health, wealth, and leisure, and should never get sick—you listen to them talk, and, man, they use the Scripture.

In fact, they use the Scripture more than we in the Bible church movement use the Scripture. But you will discover that when they use the Scripture, it is ripped out of its context.

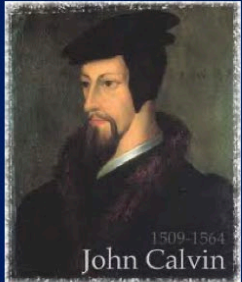
You can make the Bible say whatever you want it to say, if you do not care about context. "Judas went out and hanged himself. Go thou and do likewise. And what you do do quickly" (paraphrase, Matthew 27:5; Luke 10:37; John 13:27). I just took three statements from Scripture out of their context and slung them all together to teach some kind of doctrine of suicide that the Bible does not teach.

So that is largely what you see going on in this Bible vs. Neo-Calvinism debate related to the Perseverance of the Saints. There is Scripture that is used. The question is, "Are they using it correctly?"

And as I have tried to look into this, I have found seven verses that are used over and over and over and over again to prove this doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. None of them have anything to do with the Calvinistic understanding of the Perseverance of the Saints.

**Out of Context Verses Used to Support
the Perseverance of the Saints**

1. Matthew 24:13
2. John 15:5-6, 8
3. 2 Corinthians 13:5
4. Ephesians 2:10
5. Hebrews 12:14
6. Revelation 13:10
7. Revelation 14:12



1509-1564
John Calvin

So the first one on our list today is Matthew 24:13, which says,

"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

So how do you know if you are really saved or not? How do you know if you are saved—if you are going to heaven or hell when you die? Well, you have to endure (Matthew 24:13), meaning that you have to have a lifestyle that is overcoming in terms of good works and good doctrine.

I do not think the Calvinists are teaching perfection. But what they teach is that there cannot be these ongoing pockets of sin in your life. And your life had better be on an upward trajectory—not where you are sinless, but sinning less.

And you had better do that to *"the end"* (Matthew 24:13)—which is the end of what? The end of your life. So *"saved"* (Matthew 24:13) is whether you are justified. "Endures"

(Matthew 24:13) has to do with an overcoming lifestyle amongst people that are the elect. And *"the end"* (Matthew 24:13) means that you have to reach the end of your life in this upward trajectory, or there are questions as to whether or not you are really a Christian at all.

So you look at a verse like Matthew 24:13, and it looks at first glance as though it is supporting the Perseverance of the Saints teaching. Interestingly enough, this was the verse that switched Augustine's thinking. As we have tried to explain, a lot of these teachings—whether it is Amillennialism, or this heavy emphasis on divine sovereignty—came into Christianity through the influence of probably the most influential theologian that ever lived: Augustine.

And here I am using "influence" in a negative, not necessarily in a positive, way. Augustine was a rather interesting guy. In the fourth century, he believed a lot of what we believe.

But something switched Augustine's beliefs. What switched his beliefs was Matthew 24:13. So Matthew 24:13 is a pivotal verse in the whole discussion. And of course, John Calvin, writing over a thousand years later, borrowed from Augustine constantly.

It is hard to get very far into Calvin's writings without reading, "Augustine says,...." And Calvin calls Augustine "Saint Augustine," or "Father Augustine." "Augustine says,...." And in fact, Calvin, (I have given you this quote earlier in this series) said, "I could reconstruct my whole theology based on the writings of Augustine."

And I do not think that Augustine was good for the Bible. I do not think that he was good for Christianity. His view on Matthew 24:13 is just another example of it.

Augustine became more involved in divine sovereignty, formulating what today we would call Calvinism, although obviously he did not call it that. And he switched his view on a lot of things because of Matthew 24:13.

So here is a quote from Dave Anderson, who has looked into this issue, talking about the significance of Matthew 24:13 on Augustine's thinking. Anderson writes,

"...we chose Augustine as a case in point...Specifically, his reinterpretation of Matt 24:13 ('he who endures to the end will be saved') as a spiritual salvation instead of a physical salvation (to enter and populate the Millennium) caused drastic changes in his soteriology [doctrine of salvation]."³

Augustine used to look at Matthew 24:13 as meaning, "You know what, if you are living on the earth in the Tribulation Period, you have to make it to the end of the Tribulation Period to be rescued by Jesus from the Antichrist."

³ David R. Anderson, "The Soteriological Impact of Augustine's Change from Premillennialism to Amillennialism: Part One," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* Volume 15, no. 28 (2002): 25. and Part Two is in no 29, Autumn, 2002.

So Augustine used to hold to a physical salvation interpretation. But Matthew 24:13 switched his beliefs and he started to look at it as spiritual salvation.

So *"saved"* (Matthew 24:13) is "Are you born again or not?" not "Are you going to be physically saved or protected by Jesus?" And we are no longer dealing with physical salvation, but spiritual salvation.

Anderson goes on and says,

"Perseverance of the saints (faithfulness until the end of one's physical life) became the 'sine qua non' [a Latin phrase which means "without which there is nothing"] of his soteriology. One could believe in Christ, have the fruit of the elect, but prove he was not elect if he should not persevere in faithfulness until the end of his physical life."⁴

So Matthew 24:13 was a game-changer for Augustine. And this is why Augustine moved in the direction that he moved in. And it later influenced the thinking of Calvin. So it is very, very common for Calvinist interpreters, when you listen to them, to promote Perseverance of the Saints, the "P," and quote Matthew 24:13.

So just to show you how this happens, here is a quote from John MacArthur. And I tread lightly because he just passed away, and I want comfort and everything to go to friends, family, and people that have been influenced by John MacArthur. But this is just an example of many that I could pull. This is from his New Testament commentary on Matthew. So you are reading what he says on Matthew 24-25, which is the Olivet Discourse.

And to be honest with you, he is doing a great job with it. I am reading it and I am saying, "Wow, he has Matthew 24-25 down. He is putting it in the events of the seven-year Tribulation Period."

And everything is fine until you get to Matthew 24:13. When you get to Matthew 24:13, it is as if MacArthur becomes a different person. So he gets to Matthew 24:13, and what does he say?

"But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved'...his endurance will be a Spirit-empowered product and proof of the reality that he is saved."⁵

Now, MacArthur was not talking like this at all prior to Matthew 24:13. And then when he finishes Matthew 24:13, he goes back to his normal self. But it is as though, on Matthew 24:13, all of a sudden he downloads into his written commentary this whole lecture on why we have to make it to the end of our lives in good works to prove that we are one of the elect.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John MacArthur, "Matthew 24–25," *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 28.

MacArthur completely loses the context in Matthew 24:13, even though he clearly understands the context, because prior to Matthew 24:13, everything is fine, and after Matthew 24:13, everything is fine.

MacArthur says,

"Neither the high cost of discipleship nor the deception of false prophets nor the enticement of sin will cause true believers to renounce Christ, because He Himself will protect them from defection. Endurance is always a mark of salvation..."⁶

Then MacArthur starts talking about the "P" in Calvinism.

"The perseverance of the saints in faith is a very basic element of salvation teaching in the New Testament. It states that people who are genuinely saved do not depart from the faith (see John 8: 31; 1 Cor 15: 1-2; Col. 1: 21-23; Heb. 2: 1-3; 3: 14; 4: 14; 6: 11-12; 10: 39; 12: 14; James 1: 2-4)..."

Now look at this. He has a bracket here, and he has all these verses. And your average person looks at that and says, "Well, this must be true. Look at all the verses he is quoting."

But look all the verses up yourself and ask yourself, "Is he representing these verses correctly?" I am of the view that he is not representing these verses correctly, because he is turning it into something that these verses are not talking about.

And then MacArthur says,

"...Endurance...does give evidence of the spiritual life that resides in the believer..."⁷

So you are reading MacArthur's commentary, which is very good, all about the seven-year Tribulation Period and the things that are coming. You get to Matthew 24:13, and it is almost like he becomes a different person.

All of a sudden he downloads into the passage a big lecture on the Perseverance of the Saints and how we have to persevere in good works to prove that we are one of the elect. Yet the passage is not talking about that, as I will show you. And John MacArthur certainly did not treat these chapters like he did with Matthew 24:13 when he was analyzing the prior verses or the verses that come after.

So this is the frustration that I have with a lot of this Neo-Calvinism stuff. You can agree with somebody on so much—which I do with John MacArthur—but then all of a sudden he wants to promote the "P," the Perseverance of the Saints, whether the verse talks about it or not.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

So with that being said, it is just hard for me to recommend commentaries like this to people. People say, "Well, what commentary should I read?" And I go, "That's a great question. I don't know if I have a unified commentary set that I could carte blanche recommend, because authors do this kind of thing frequently."

So the question becomes, "Is Matthew 24:13 talking about the Perseverance of the Saints?"

"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

Is that talking about the "P" in Calvinism, the Perseverance of the Saints? I would argue that such a reading is totally and completely foreign to the context.

Whatever you believe about the Perseverance of the Saints, do not go to Matthew 24 for that, because Matthew 24 is not talking about that. Well, what is Matthew 24:13 talking about? Well, the last time I checked, verse 15 comes after verse 13. Isn't that heavy? What am I doing here? I am looking at the whole context of this to figure out what Jesus is saying.

I am not saying, "I need a verse for the 'P' in the Perseverance of the Saints," and running to something in the Bible that looks similar. That is not how you study the Word of God. That is really not how you study anything. What if I got an email from you and I just had an idea of what you were going to say to me, and I just nitpicked two or three lines, and threw them together?

You would be somewhat insulted by that, wouldn't you? That is not respecting authorial intent. And yet this happens all the time in the world of theology.

So what is Matthew 24:13 talking about? Matthew 24:15-16, 20 says,

"Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains..." (Matthew 24:15-16).

If this is talking about me and my need to persevere, what mountain should I flee to exactly? And what if I live in a part of the world where there are not any mountains?

"...But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath" (Matthew 24:20).

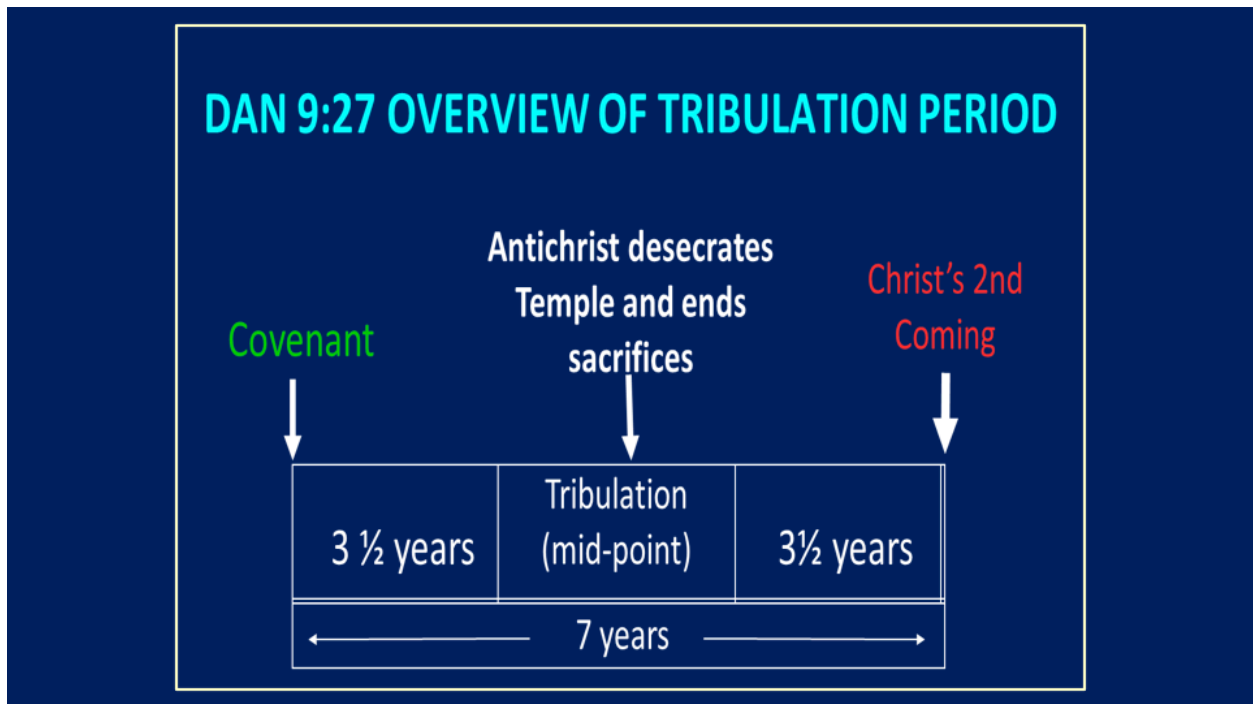
The Sabbath would be Saturday. So I am looking at this and I am saying, "This sounds pretty Jewish to me." So what is this dealing with?

Jesus says, *"...(let the reader understand)..." (Matthew 24:15)* what was spoken through the prophet Daniel. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus is quoting Daniel 9:27, which, by the way, has nothing to do with the church. In fact, when Daniel 9:27 was given, the church did not even exist. Jesus is outlining what the nation of Israel is going to experience in the Tribulation Period.

Daniel 9:27 says,

"And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week [seven years], but in the middle of the week [three and a half years into it] he [Antichrist] will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate" (Daniel 9:27).

What is Jesus, referring to Daniel 9:27, talking about? He is referring to this: the seven-year Tribulation Period. There is coming upon the earth a Tribulation Period for seven years.



We know what is going to start the Tribulation Period. There is going to be a peace treaty of some kind between the Antichrist and unbelieving Israel. We know what is going to happen right in the middle of the Tribulation Period. The Antichrist will go into the functioning Jewish temple, and put an end to their sacrificial system, and set up an image in the temple.

(And by the way, this was all done before in the form of a dress rehearsal through a man named Antiochus Epiphanes.) Then what is going to happen at the end of the seven years? Jesus is coming back.

Jesus' Second Coming is not the Rapture. The Rapture has already happened before the Tribulation Period even starts. Jesus' Second Coming is at the end of the Tribulation Period.

In His Second Coming, Christ will come back and physically rescue surviving Jews from the Antichrist, who is trying to wipe the Jews out in the second half of the Tribulation Period.

And you toss into the mix Revelation 12:6-17, and right when the beast desecrates the temple at the midpoint of the Tribulation, Satan, who still currently has access to God's throne, loses access.

Satan can still go into the throne room. Did you know that? Read Job 1-2. There you will see it as clearly as it can be seen. Satan cannot go into the throne room to worship and serve as he once did as a high ranking angel, but he can go into the throne room to communicate and accuse. This is why Jesus said to Peter: "Satan has been requesting permission to sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31, paraphrase). Wow, that'd be a scary conversation, wouldn't it?

"Lord, if Satan ever wants to do that to me, just keep that to Yourself." That would scare the daylight out of me. But Jesus says to Peter, "I prayed for you" (Luke 22:32, paraphrase).

So Satan, who now has access to God's throne, loses access in Revelation 12:6-7, and he plunges to the earth. And that is why Revelation 12 says, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because Satan has come down to you with great wrath, knowing that his time is short" (Revelation 12:12, paraphrase).

Well, what does that mean? It means that Satan has exactly three and a half years left to destroy Israel, the woman clothed with the sun and the moon and the twelve stars (Revelation 12:1, reference to Israel in relation to Genesis 37:9-10). Satan knows that if he does not destroy Israel in the second half of the Tribulation Period, the Kingdom is going to come to the earth. And Satan does not want the Kingdom to come to the earth, because he has been ruling the earth illegitimately since the Fall in Eden.

So Satan has exactly three and a half years left to destroy Israel so that the Kingdom will not come, because God has purposed to bless the world through Israel.

And one of the blessings yet to come is the Kingdom Age, during which time Satan will be bound for a thousand years. At the end of that thousand-year Kingdom, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire.

In Satan's darkened mind, he thinks that he can stop this prophecy from happening by blotting out the instrument through which the Kingdom will come: Israel. And Satan almost pulls it off. You have to give the guy credit for trying. Zechariah 13:8-9 says that during that time period, two thirds of the Jewish people will be wiped out and the only survivors will be a third.

God is going to bring that third to saving faith and fulfill His Kingdom promises through them. So when Jesus says that he who endures to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13), He is talking about the generation of Jews that watches this happen.

And Jesus says to them, "If you make it to the end of the seven years, and you are not part of the two thirds that are killed, then you are going to be saved" (paraphrase, Matthew 24:13; Zechariah 13:8-9).

Jesus does not use *"saved"* (Matthew 24:13) in the sense that you are going to heaven, the way we typically use the word "saved." But He uses *"saved"* (Matthew 24:13) in the sense that the Jews are going to be physically protected from the Antichrist.

Once Satan loses access permanently to God's throne and plummets to the earth, I am of the view that he goes right inside the beast or the Antichrist. And I think that because Revelation 13:4 seems to imply that. It is not as clear as I would like it to be.

But there are only two men in the history of the Bible who are called the "son of perdition." The first one is Judas (John 17:12), and the second one is the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Those are the only two people called the "son of perdition," or the "son of destruction" in Scripture. And you have to ask yourself, "What do both of them have in common?"

Both Judas and the Antichrist were personally indwelt, not by a demon, but by the devil himself, to pull off a major act: Judas in the betrayal of Christ; Antichrist in the attempt to gobble up Israel so the Kingdom will not come.

So when Jesus says that he who endures to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13), the furthest thing from His mind is the "P" in Calvinism (Perseverance of the Saints). In Matthew 24:13, Jesus is giving instructions to Jewish people living in Jerusalem who watched the temple desecrated midway through the Tribulation Period.

He is saying to them, "You need to make it to the end of the seven years, because if you make it to the end of the seven years, you are going to be physically protected by Jesus" (Matthew 24:4-31, paraphrase).

So Jesus is using the word "save" very differently from how the Perseverance of the Saints people are using it.

To the Calvinists, "saved" in Matthew 24:13 means that I have to have this upward ascent in my life, to the end of my life, to prove that I am saved, or one of the elect. Yet that is not what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 24:13, even though the words look similar. He is talking about physical protection of the Jewish people who are fortunate enough to make it to the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period, because all hell is about to be poured out on them, which is going to be so bad that two thirds of them are going to be wiped out.

"So get to the end." is what He is saying. "And then Jesus will come back and protect you from the satanically possessed, satanically energized Antichrist."

So what am I doing here? Am I trying to give you a lesson in eschatology? That would not be a bad thing. But all I am doing is putting a statement back in its context to get its meaning.

Daniel 9:27 is part of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, which is a stopwatch that has 490 years on it. Four hundred eighty-three of the 490 years have already been fulfilled: from the decree of Artaxerxes until Palm Sunday.

The best of the best have looked into this, and you guys have already heard me talk about it in other lessons and defend it. There are exactly 483 years between the decree of Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2) until Jesus showed up on the exact day (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19).

And when it became apparent that the nation of Israel was going to reject Jesus, because that was when He presented His credentials to the nation of Israel—on Palm Sunday—God put His finger on the pause button.

And then from there you have the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. And not long after that, God created a new man, which is not a nation, but a spiritual body, called the church.

And we have been in the Church Age for 2,000 years while this clock is on hold. One of these days the body of Christ will be made complete. Paul talks about that in Romans 11. The full number of Gentiles will come in, and when that happens, the church is translated from earth to heaven, the restrainer is removed, the Antichrist comes forward, and God's finger moves off the pause button to the restart button.

And seven years tick by until the Second Advent of Jesus. And that whole package concerns whom? Israel. It is not Church Age truth. Daniel 9:27 was given before the church even existed.

Daniel 9:24, beginning that 490-year stopwatch, says,

"Seventy weeks [seventy sevens, 490 years] have been decreed for your people and your holy city..." (Daniel 9:24).

Now, who was Gabriel, who gave this to Daniel during the Babylonian captivity, talking to? Gabriel was talking to Daniel.

So when Daniel 9:24 says that this stopwatch concerns *"your people and your holy city"* (Daniel 9:24), it concerns the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, even the part of the nation of Israel that is seven years yet future. Daniel 9:24 refers to all Israel.

And if Daniel had raised his hand and said, "Gabriel, I have a question: what about the church?" Gabriel would have said, "What are you talking about?" because the church was unknown.

Daniel did not know anything about a church. Gabriel did not know anything about a church. God knew, because He is omniscient, that the church would come.

So when God restarts the clock, it is all about Israel. The church is not here when the prophecies of Daniel 9 are given.

*"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city,..."
(Daniel 9:24).*

And then six things are listed, which all, I think, speak of the Kingdom.

"...to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place" (Daniel 9:24).

The translation of those six clauses is that the Kingdom will be in full swing once this clock that has been stopped reaches year 490.

So that is the context of what Jesus is talking about when He says that he who endures to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13). It is a Jewish context.

Salvation in Matthew 24:13 does not refer to going to heaven. It is physical protection from the Antichrist who has been indwelt by Satan and is trying to kill off all the Jewish people.

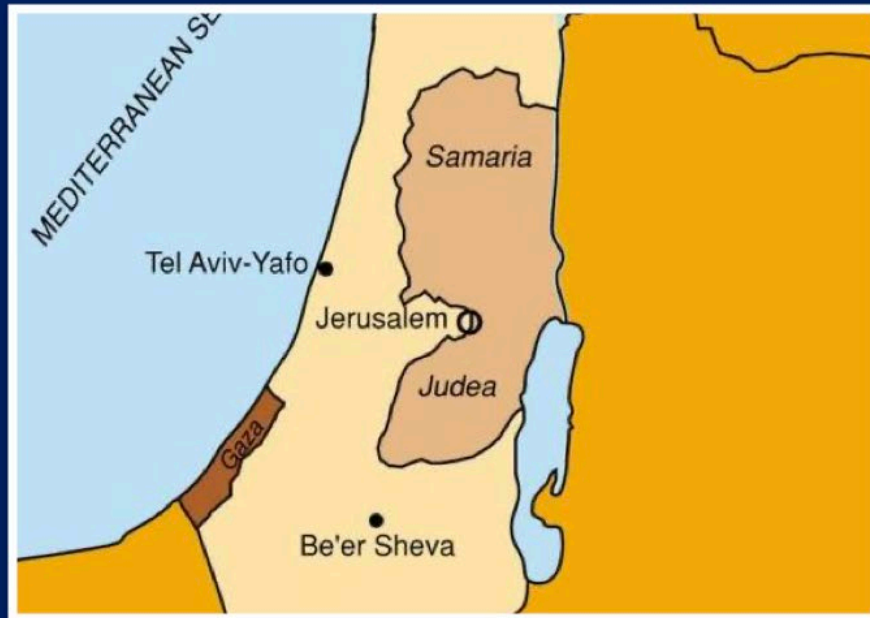
Jesus says, "You want to be physically protected from that. Make it to the end. You will be rescued and you will enter the Kingdom."

This becomes so obvious when you just read all of it together instead of cherry picking something.

Jesus says,

"Therefore, when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains..." (Matthew 24:15-16).

Well, where is Judea? Here is where Judea is. Here is where Jerusalem is. I would assume the mountains would be over here in modern-day Jordan.



In fact, you can float on the Dead Sea today and look into Jordan. And I have done that. I have gone to the Dead Sea and floated in it. I was convinced that I would be the first person to sink in the Dead Sea, but it holds me up just fine. And you are floating there, and you can look into Jordan and see the mountains there.

I think that is where the Jewish Tribulation survivors are supposed to flee to: a place called Petra, where they will be supernaturally protected by God.

So that is the context of Matthew 24. Then Jesus says this—does this not give the whole thing away?

"But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath"
(Matthew 24:20).

Jesus is referring to when the Jews flee into Petra. Why does Jesus say,

"But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath"
(Matthew 24:20)?

Dr. Price says,

"...stormy weather comes with torrential rains that make crossing wadis in the Judean hills treacherous...concern about the possibility of travel on the Sabbath, where rabbinic law prohibited going more than a Sabbath day's journey (i.e., beyond the immediate vicinity of the city)..."⁸

⁸ Dr. Randall Price, "Historical Problems with a First-Century Fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse," in *The End Times Controversy*, ed. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 2003), 394.

So concerning the Jews who survived the Tribulation fleeing to modern-day Jordan, Jesus says, "Pray that when this happens, it will not be in the winter, because that is going to make travel difficult. "And pray that it will not be on the Sabbath (which for Israel is Saturday), because there are all kinds of rabbinical laws on the books regarding how far you can travel on the Sabbath, and you are going to violate all that."

So this is a Jewish context. The word *"Sabbath"* (Matthew 24:20) should give it away. Israel's Sabbath was on the last day of the week. That is not the church.

Our time of gathering is on the first day of the week, Sunday, because Jesus rose on a Sunday. He certainly did not rise on Monday, because "rainy days and Mondays always get me down," right?

And then in the midst of all this, Jesus talks about the elect:

"For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" (Matthew 24:21-22).

According to Neo-Calvinism, you are elected unto salvation. You are chosen. So Calvinists take that theological concept and they read it right into Matthew 24. If you are one of the elect and you have received the gift of faith, and regeneration has preceded faith, and all of that kind of stuff, then it is going to show up in your lifestyle.

You have to make it to the end of your life in good works—not being sinless, but sinning less—overcoming, and only when you get to the end is the "P" (Perseverance of the Saints) satisfied, so that you can look back and say, "Whew, I am one of the elect." And at that point you have final salvation, because everything up to that point in time, your salvation is kind of like a coin toss. That is all a theology—really it is a philosophy—read into a passage that is not dealing with that.

Whatever you want to do with the elect, do not use Matthew 24 for it. Who is the elect in Matthew 24? The elect is Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:7 says,

"The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest..." (Deuteronomy 7:7).

What is the election here? It is God's choice of a nation. God could have used any nation He wanted to. He chose little Israel. Why did God choose Israel? Because He is God and wanted to do that.

So when you see references to the "elect" in Matthew 24, it is dealing with God's choice of a nation to be the standard bearer of His truth. It has nothing to do with "You're going to heaven. You're going to hell." which is what you have in Neo-Calvinism.

So if you want to do that with the Bible, do not use Matthew 24, because that is not what Matthew 24 is dealing with. And you go to Isaiah 65:21-22, speaking of Israel:

"They will build houses and inhabit them; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit." (Isaiah 65:21).

This passage is Millennial, referring to happenings in the Millennial Kingdom.

"They will not build and another inhabit,..." (Isaiah 65:22).

I guess we are not going to have communism in the Millennial Kingdom.

"...They will not plant and another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands" (Isaiah 65:22).

You will build a house, and the house will fall apart before you do, because there will be abnormally long lifespans in the Millennium.

So the *"chosen ones"* (Isaiah 65:22) here does not refer to those going to heaven or going to hell. What it is dealing with is God's choice of a nation. God chose to bless the world through a nation, the nation of Israel. The choice here is national, not individual.

And yet, if you lose this context, or read all this stuff about personal election into Matthew 24, well, what is *"the end"* (Matthew 24:13)? "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:13, paraphrase). What does *"the end"* (Matthew 24:13) mean? Well, if you read that without its context, you think it means, "I have to get to the end of my life—before death, things have to be in an upward ascent."

But that is not what *"the end"* (Matthew 24:13) means here in Matthew 24. *"The end"* (Matthew 24:13) is not talking about the end of your life. *"The end"* (Matthew 24:13) is talking about the end of a seven-year clock.

And we know that because Matthew 24:3 comes before Matthew 24:13. Matthew 24:3 gives you the whole setting of the Olivet Discourse, which is a teaching Jesus gave from the Mount of Olives. (That is why it is called the Olivet Discourse, right? I asked one of my students once, "Why do we call it the Olivet Discourse?" And the student replied, "Because we get all of it." And that is a wrong answer, right?)

And I am not even sure why we call it the "Olivet Discourse," as though Jesus gave a sermon or something. He gave teaching, but it was the fruit of a conversation, because the disciples were asking Him questions and He was answering.

There was give and take in the Olivet Discourse. It was not like the Sermon on the Mount, which looks to me like an actual sermon. I would prefer to call this the "Olivet Conversation."

It is just that Jesus does most of the talking, which is always smart to do, right? If you get into a conversation with Jesus, let Him do the talking.

So what precipitated this whole Olivet Discourse? Matthew 24 says,

"As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives [that is why we call it the Olivet Discourse], the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things happen,...'" (Matthew 24:3).

Now, Jesus just finished talking about the destruction of the temple: not one stone will be left on another (Matthew 24:1-2).

The disciples thought that Jesus was talking about the end of the age. They said, "Tell us about the end of the age."

"... 'Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" (Matthew 24:3).

So if you are going to read "end of one's life" into Matthew 24:13, you have to ignore how Jesus is using the word "end" at the beginning of Matthew 24.

The end Jesus is speaking of is the end of seven years, not the end of your life. Notice Matthew 24:6.

"You..." (Matthew 24:6).

Now, that is a generic "you," meaning Israel yet future—which is okay. The Bible talks like this frequently.

When God spoke to Moses in Deuteronomy 28, and started to outline discipline that would come upon Israel if they disobeyed God, He said, "All these things will come upon you" (paraphrase, Deuteronomy 28:15), describing things that would come into existence after Moses was dead.

So you can have a generic "you" concept in the Bible. And the reason I say that is that there are these people today called preterists, who want to ram, jam, and cram everything back into A.D. 70.

Preterists make a big deal about the word "you" and they say that the "you" has to refer to the disciples. No, it does not. You can have a generic "you."

Matthew 24:6 says,

"You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end" (Matthew 24:6).

What end? The end of seven years. "You have to persevere for seven years, if you are going to be physically protected by Jesus." Matthew 24 is not referring to salvation at the end of one's life.

So when Matthew 24:13 says,

"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

I cannot switch horses in midstream and redefine "end" (Matthew 24:13) as the end of one's life.

So this salvation referred to in Matthew 24:13 is physical protection that is coming for the Jews that watch the desecration of the temple, if they make it to the end of the Tribulation.

Now, what kind of protection are they going to get? Well, it is right there in Matthew 24:31.

"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET..." (Matthew 24:31).

Now, that is not the Rapture, right? Because God can have more than one trumpet, amen?

"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER ["episynago"] HIS ELECT..." (Matthew 24:31).

Who are the "ELECT" (Matthew 24:31)? National Israel.

"...FROM THE FOUR WINDS, FROM ONE END OF THE SKY TO THE OTHER" (Matthew 24:31).

So Matthew 24 is talking about a physical protection where Jesus gathers the nation of Israel. The word "gather together" is the Greek word "episynago" (ἐπισυνάγω), from which we get what word? "Synagogue."

"I want to have synagogue with you. And I am going to, at the end, as the Antichrist looks like he is going to get the upper hand, protect you, and gather you to Myself" (Matthew 24:31, paraphrase).

This is what precipitated the whole Olivet conversation. Matthew 23:37-39 says,

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem,..." (Matthew 23:37).

Does that sound like a denominational Christian church there? No. Jesus is dealing with Israel.

"...who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather ["episynago"] your children together, the way a hen gathers ["episynago"] her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matthew 23:37).

"The problem was not Me. The problem was you. You did not want Me."

"Behold, your house..." (Matthew 23:38).

What house is that? The temple, which Jesus used to call His Father's house. "I will make My Father's house a house of prayer" (paraphrase, Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46; quoting Isaiah 56:7; also see John 2:16).

"Well, it is not My house anymore. It is yours, because you threw Me out."

"Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say,..." (Matthew 23:38-39).

If you want Romans 10:9, this is where to put it. Do not put that in your evangelistic track, because Romans 10:9 is referring to something that Israel nationally has to verbally say to be rescued by Jesus at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

"...until you say, "BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!" (Matthew 23:39).

Matthew 23:39 is quoting a Messianic psalm: Psalm 118:26. What Jesus is saying is, "I am not coming back for this nation that has rejected Me, until you [Israel] nationally recognize Me as your Messiah.

And you have to do that verbally. And then when you do that, I am going to come back and I am going to "episynago" (ἐπισυνάγω)—gather—you."

The gathering is not vertical. It is horizontal. "I am going to protect you from the Antichrist. So you Jews that see the temple desecrated, you need to endure to the end of the seven years when this happens, so you can be saved—physically protected—from the Antichrist."

Do you follow? And the word "saved" (Matthew 24:13)—

"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Matthew 24:13)—

we look at the word "saved" (Matthew 24:13), and we think that is always talking about justification. And I am here to tell you that the Greek word "sozo" (σῶζω), which is a verb; and the Greek word "soteria" (σωτηρία), which is a noun coming from the same root as "sozo" (σῶζω);—those words can mean justification.

"Hey, so-and-so, has your family member been saved?" And we typically use that to say "saved from hell because they trusted Christ." But I am here to tell you that the word "saved" does not always mean that in the Bible.

Look at Paul—how he uses the word "soteria" (σωτηρία) in Philippians 1:19:

"for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance ['soteria'] through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," (Philippians 1:19).

Was Paul needing to get saved when he wrote Philippians? I mean, I hope not, or he is writing Philippians as an unregenerate person.

When Paul uses the word saved in Philippians 1:19, he is saying, "I want to get out of jail. I want to get out of prison."

How about Hebrews 11:7, in the Hall of Faith?

"By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation [soteria] of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

Was Noah saved because he built an ark? Well, did Noah not go to hell because he built an ark? That cannot be true, because that is salvation by works. When Hebrews 11:7 talks about "salvation" ("soteria" [σωτηρία]), it means salvation from water. See that?

Similarly, the word "saved" is used in Matthew 24:13 to refer to physical protection by Christ's Second Advent. "...the one who endures to the end..." (Matthew 24:13) will be not spiritually saved, but physically protected by the Second Advent of Jesus Christ.

So you will notice that all I did there was take Matthew 24:13 and put it in its context. That is the seminal verse that swayed Augustine, and yet the context was totally butchered.