

**THE PRELUDE TO THE END**

Mark 13:1-13

**Intro:** We have seen in our study of the Gospel of Mark that which can be confirmed by the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, that the Lord Jesus spent the major part of His public ministry in doing two things:

- 1) The first could be described using two words: teaching and preaching.
- 2) The second was physical healing.

But while the teaching and preaching ministry of the Lord continued throughout His ministry on earth, we have in the Gospels evidence that there were three times when He spoke in greater detail as He taught. The first is found in its most complete form in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. It has been called, The Sermon on the Mount, because that is where it was delivered. We are not told what mountain it was, but don't think of it as a place like Mt. Hood, or Mt. Rainier. It was one of the high hills located in the land of Israel (of which there are many). Portions of this message are found throughout the Gospels of Mark and Luke. It seems that the truths that the Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount, at least some of them, were taught at different times during our Lord's ministry.

The second message is called The Olivet Discourse. Again Matthew gave it in its most complete form, and you will find it in Matthew 24 and 25. But, as we are about to see in the passage before us, contrary to the case of The Sermon on the Mount, Mark and Luke both devote special space to the Olivet Discourse. Matthew tells us that it was delivered on "the mount of Olives which was located just outside of the city of Jerusalem on the other side of the brook Kidron. As you can see from verse 3 of our text in Mark, Mark mentioned the mount of Olives, and that this message was actually delivered to four of the apostles, "Peter and James and John and Peter." Luke didn't mention the place at all.

The third message is only in the Gospel of John, chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16. The Lord was with His disciples in the Upper Room for most of the message, and so that is why it is called The Upper Room Discourse. I say, "for most of the message," because at the end of John 14 we are told that the Lord said to His disciples, "Arise, let us go hence." They went to the Garden of Gethsemane where the Lord prayed and was arrested.

So these three messages, the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse,

and the Upper Room Discourse, are, by their verse size, three very important parts of the Lord's teaching ministry.

The Sermon on the Mount deals with the way that the Lord wanted His disciples to live. Those three chapters in Matthew's Gospel are important for all of us to know and to apply to our lives. The Olivet Discourse which we will begin to consider this morning, has to do with prophecy which is yet to be fulfilled, focusing especially on the Great Tribulation. The Upper Room Discourse in John's Gospel has to do with the new relationship that the Lord's people were to have following the ascension of our Lord which, as we know, was preceded by His death and His resurrection.

But now going to our text in Mark 13, unfortunately this has become a battlefield that has caused deep divisions among the people of God. And I suppose it will remain that way until the Lord comes for us. But I know that the Lord never intended for it to be that way. The Apostle Paul told Timothy in his second epistle that "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (2 Tim 2:24). The verses that follow show that Paul was referring mainly to preaching the Gospel, but if it has its application to the way we are to treat those who do not believe in Christ, it surely has even more of an application when one Christian is dealing with another Christian.

I looked up the word "strive" and found that it is allied with the Greek word for a sword. Our preaching and teaching are not to be argumentative, or warlike. Instead, as Paul said, and this statement does apply to believers, we are to speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). You will probably never find two Christians who believe the same way about every thing. And none of us knows all of the truth. If Paul said (and he did), "for we know in part, and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9), and that "now we see through a glass darkly," then there are things in Scripture that obviously are hard to understand, and probably some things that are impossible to understand. At least we all have a lot to learn.

Now on most things the Bible is very clear. It is very clear in what it teaches about God. It is very clear in what it teaches about man. It is very clear in what it teaches about sin. And it is very clear in what it teaches about salvation. It is very clear in what it teaches about holiness. And it is very clear in what it teaches about the fact that the Lord is coming back. We know from Scripture that there is a heaven, and that there is a hell.

Even Isaiah spoke about a new heaven and a new earth. But it is when we seek to put the prophetic picture together that we part company. But we must not allow it to affect our fellowship with each other. Our fellowship is not based upon whether we are premillennial, or amillennial, or post-millennial, or pre-trib, or mid-trib, or post-trib. Our fellowship is based upon our relationship with God the Father and His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We must start with the Gospel. When Saul of Tarsus was saved, his theology underwent a complete transformation. Even though he had been trained by the great Gamaliel, he described his life before he knew the Lord as his Savior, as a life of ignorance and unbelief. See 1 Timothy 1:13. I read the works of many men with whom I don't see eye to eye doctrinally. Spurgeon was a post millennialist. Actually he didn't deal with prophecy very much, but he was seeking to win the world to Christ. If I had baptized 15,000 people in my lifetime I might believe that too. But if you have read about Spurgeon and the Downgrade controversy, you know that Spurgeon's later years were not his happiest. But don't try to take my Spurgeon books away from me. My heart has been blessed many, many times as I have read his life and his messages. I know that we are going to see everything eye to eye some day, but until then I want to get all of the help I possibly can from Spurgeon, or anyone else who knows and loves the Lord and His Word regardless of what his views of prophecy might be.

Now I am not minimizing the importance of prophecy. I believe it is extremely important, and I hold some very positive convictions regarding the last days, some of which I want to share with you. But what I am saying is that we all need to keep learning, and that we must not let our differences in prophecy mar our fellowship with each other. If we know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are going to be together eternally, and so we had better learn now how much we are to love each other.

Now let me give a little background on this passage. When the Lord spoke these words, there was no church. According to Matthew 16 the Lord said, "I will build my church," but obviously He was speaking in the future tense. Personally I believe that the church began on the Day of Pentecost which is described for us in Acts 2. Later Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

After the Lord was raised from the dead, and just before He ascended

back to the Father, we are told that after He had spoken to them about the kingdom of God, He did and said this:

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:4-5).

He obviously was talking about what happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. We all have been baptized by the Spirit into the Church, the Body of Christ.

At the time the Lord spoke these words which we have in Mark 13, therefore, there was no church, and I personally believe that Mark 13 does not have to do with the church; it has to do with the nation Israel. The apostles would not have known what the Lord was talking about if He had spoken to them about the church.

He was speaking, as these passages which I have referred to in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, about what was going to happen in a future day to Israel, when the stones of the Temple would be thrown down. This is referred to as a time of trouble worse than the world has ever seen.

This was predicted by Daniel where in chapter 12 and verse 1 of the book which bears his name we read “that there shall be a time of trouble, such as ever was since there was a nation to that same time.”

Also we have these words in Jeremiah 30:7-11:

7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

8 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:

9 But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

11 For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet

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will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

Now, why am I reading these verses to you? It is to show you that the purpose of the Great Tribulation, does not include the Church, but it is a time of judgment upon Israel, to bring Israel back to the Lord. Therefore, I believe that what we are to anticipate, is not the Great Tribulation, but the coming of the Lord for His Church. From passages like 2 Timothy 3 we who are in the Church, may experience persecutions before the Lord returns, but not the Great Tribulation. The radical Muslims hate Israel, and they hate America, but they also hate those of us who are Christians. It may be that we will suffer severe persecution before the Lord comes. I don't know. I am not setting dates. But it does seem to me that we could be very close to the time predicted by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. What possibly could be more comforting to us than to have the Lord come to take us to be with Himself forever. We are to be "looking for that blessed hope" which Paul spoke about in Titus 2:13, not as some event in the far distance future, but as an event which could take place today.

When you read your Bible, and you come across words like Jacob and Israel and Zion and the like, don't interpret them as meaning the church. I believe that God is eventually going to bring together all of His redeemed, but just how that is going to be, or exactly when, I don't know. But for the present, we need to be looking, not for the Great Tribulation, but for the Lord. He is coming! He could come today! We need to be living for Him, and looking for Him, and praying like the Apostle John did at the end of the book of the Revelation which is God's major revelation of the Great Tribulation, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

There are three great lines of truth in Scripture. One has to do with God's purpose for and His sovereignty over the nations of the earth. The second is His purpose for Israel. And the third is the Church, those of us in this present age who have been saved by the work of the Holy Spirit, and baptized into the body of Christ, and awaiting His return. He will come later in all of His glory to rule and reign on the earth, and we will reign with Him.

Now I haven't gotten very far in my text for today, but let me make a few observations before we observe the Lord's Supper together. It is very true that what the Lord said in verses 5 through 13 have to do with the days, or

possibly years, before the Great Tribulation. John Mark's description of the Great Tribulation begins in verse 14. So we in the church could well see and experience what we have in here in the first part of verse 13 because it will include the whole world. This is the prelude, the conditions that will lead to the Great Tribulations. Just when the rapture of the Church will take place in this, the Lord did not indicate because it would have not been understood, as I have said. But it must be before most of this because there will be Jewish believers on the earth to bear testimony to the Gospel before rulers and kings, i.e., Gentile rulers and kings, and the Gospel will go to all of the nations as God claims His elect. And yet with all of the difficulties that will come at the beginning, notice the words at the end of verse 7, "but the end shall not be yet." It is probably going to be the case that all of the witnessing that is being done to Jews throughout the world, will not bear fruit until after the Church is gone when redeemed Jews will spread the Gospel in all of the nations of the earth where they will have been scattered and persecuted.

**Concl:** But let me close with a warning and an appeal.

The Lord spoke of deception as he spoke of the end times. Deception prevails today. People are deceived every day into believing that sin is harmless, and sin is fun. But many people are finding out that sin is deadly. People are deceived into thinking that some people may have trouble by disregarding the warnings of Scripture, but they won't be. These terrorists who are giving their lives for Allah learn the moment they sacrifice themselves that they have been deceived, and that there is no possibility of making a change then.

There is only one place of eternal security and that is in Christ. If I were to come to you and ask you personally if you are trusting in Christ as your Savior, what proof could you give me that what you are saying is true? The Bible says that if anyone is in Christ, he, or she, is a new creature. If what you believe has not changed your life, then you don't really believe. If pleasing yourself is more important to you than pleasing God, then you can't be a Christian. None of us knows what a single day may bring to us. You may plan on turning to Christ some day, but that day may never come. All you and I can be sure of is today. That is all. Today is the day of salvation. Seek the Lord now while you can still find Him. Even tomorrow may be too late.