

**MARK**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Mark chapter 13 as we continue our study through the Word of God. This teaching by Jesus, here in Mark chapter 13 is called The Olivet Discourse and it appears in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke).

And what we see here is that Jesus and His twelve disciples leave the Temple area, they pass through the east gate, across the Kidron Valley, they then ascend up the Mount of Olives. As they are sitting on the Mount of Olives they ask Jesus three questions about the future, about the coming Kingdom. Mark speaks of two of these three questions as we will see.

Now the reason it is called The Olivet Discourse is that Jesus is teaching on the Mount of Olives, (Olivet) and He is giving them instructions or He is teaching them the things that will take place in regards to His Second Coming, even though in their minds there was only one coming, and the end of the age, (discourse). So Jesus gave to them these words, a sermon you might say on what is ahead. It is really that simple, the rest of the chapter is a lot more difficult as we will see.

The other thing we need to understand is that this is speaking to Israel, the Jewish people and not the church. And, as you will see, it is dealing with the Tribulation Period, the Second Coming of Jesus and the setting up of the Kingdom of God as Jesus rules and reigns from Jerusalem! The church has been caught up to be with the Lord prior to the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period!

I think if you approach this teaching, The Olivet Discourse with that in mind it will make more sense. And one of the keys for me is what Jesus said in Matthew 24:20-21, speaking of this time, **“And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”**

Gentiles don't have a problem traveling on the Sabbath but the Jews do and thus, Jesus is speaking to Jews about the coming Kingdom and, like I have said, He will be answering the three questions that His disciples asked Him.

Here are the questions that they asked Jesus and this is from Matthew 24:3 and the first two from Mark 13:4; *“When will these things be?” “What will be the sign of Your coming?”* or *“What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”* And, *“What will be the sign of the end of the age?”* Why in the world would they ask these questions?

Keep in mind that Jesus told His men that the Temple would be destroyed in Matthew 24 and here in Mark 13. And back in Matthew chapter 23 Jesus spoke of the desolation that will come upon Jerusalem. Remember in Luke 19:11 the focus of the disciples of Jesus, **“Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.”**

So this chapter is for the Jewish people and the coming Kingdom, the coming King and the Tribulation that will come upon this earth prior to the Second Coming of Jesus as God pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world and restores the nation of Israel, the Jewish people!

Let me share these words before we get to our text this evening that will summarize what we will be looking at. We are told,

The Olivet Discourse was given specifically to Israel and is in fact uniquely Jewish. Critical to an understanding of the Olivet Discourse is the realization that neither the church nor the rapture is addressed in it. Furthermore, contrary to what some teach, this discourse does not refer back to the judgment of A. D. 70, which is recorded in Luke 21:20-24.

The Olivet Discourse is eschatological in nature and must be read and studied carefully. To fully understand its message, the reader must connect Mark's record with the parallel passages found in Matthew and Luke. If these simple keys are kept in mind, the reader will have no difficulty understanding what the Lord has to say to us.

- James McGowan, *The Gospel of Mark – Christ The Servant*, pp.179-180

I think you will see how this all plays out and as we look at these signs of the coming Tribulation Period, the labor pains that are coming. And what I believe we are seeing right now is the Braxton Hick's contractions or these false labor pains that are preparatory for the coming labor and the birth of the Kingdom Age!

As we move into Mark chapter 13 this evening keep in mind that it is late Tuesday of the week of His crucifixion, probably late afternoon by now. It has been a long day of ministry and now Jesus is getting ready to move from the Temple area after He watched how people were giving to God, and He is going to be heading to Bethany, probably staying at the home of His friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

To do that He would head out of the Temple across the Kidron Valley and then up and over the Mount of Olives. But, as we are going to see, He doesn't travel too far before His disciples begin to question Him. With that said, let's begin reading in Mark chapter 13, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

### **MARK 13**

#### **VERSES 1-2**

As you read this you can see how these men are so much like us. They focused on the material things instead of the spiritual and Jesus corrects them. Make no mistake about it, the Temple was a thing of beauty!

But also keep in mind that they had made the Temple a den of thieves where the priests were ripping the people of God off, taking advantage of them and making a huge profit from it. The glory of God departed from the Temple long ago but now the glory of God was present before them in the person of Jesus and they did not see that, not yet!

Look at the picture here. Outwardly the Temple was beautiful and yet, as Jesus looked at it He saw the heart of the matter and it was not beautiful anymore! There was no life in it anymore!

Now just a quick history lesson regarding the Temple's in Jerusalem. Solomon built the first Temple in 953 B. C. and it was completely destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B. C.

Then, in 517 B. C., as the Jewish captives were released from their captivity, the second Temple was built under the leadership of Zerubbabel. But this was a low budget project and it didn't compare to the beauty of Solomon's Temple.

Then, in 19 or 20 B. C. Herod the Great came on the scene, and trying to get in good with the Jewish people, he expanded and beautified this second Temple, which was not fully completed until 64 A. D. by Herod Agrippa II!

And it was a sight to behold as Herod the Great used white stone, gold and silver in the re-construction of this Temple. It was a massive undertaking and this little man, under five feet tall, like to build big and he used stones that were some 36 feet long, 12 feet thick and 12 feet high, weighing some 120 tons! And they are so close together, the fit is so tight you can't even fit a credit card between them. Amazing work.

And this impressed the disciples for in Luke 21:5 we are told, “**... some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations. . .**” Get the picture, as the disciples marvel at the beauty, the solidness of this structure, Jesus is going to shock them by what He is going to tell them, the words He says. “**... ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’**” Mark 13:2.

In other words, not only is the city of Jerusalem going to be destroyed, as Luke 19:43-44 tells us, but this beautiful Temple they were admiring so much is also going to be destroyed. And this did take place in 70 A. D., only some 6 years after the refurbishing of the Temple and the surrounding buildings were completed, as Titus and the Roman army came in leveling the city and the Temple.

In fact, a soldier shot a fiery arrow and it hit the Temple and burned it to the ground. Now to retrieve all the precious metals the soldiers had to overturn the stones just as Jesus said it would happen. And you can go to Israel today and see these stones that were thrown down.

Josephus tells us in Wars of the Jews, “Now, as soon as the army had no more people to kill or plunder . . . Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple . . . this was the end which Jerusalem came to.” (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 7.1.1)

Not only that but the Romans never wanted to destroy the Temple, it was too valuable and yet, it seems to have been an accident, as I have said. Not really, God said that the Temple was going to be destroyed! (Wars of the Jews, 6.4)

Now here’s the thing we need to understand. I think all of us are in agreement that this was literally fulfilled in 70 A. D. just as Jesus said. But when it comes to the Tribulation Period, the coming judgment of God upon a Christ rejecting world, many feel that it is not to be taken literally but it is a picture or something goofy like that!

As you will see, this judgment is coming just as sure as the destruction of the Temple was foretold by Jesus!

One other point that I would like to bring out here and that is the idea that what Jesus is going to speak on was fulfilled in 70 A. D. by the Romans. Again, foolishness! There is so much wrong with that thinking, which is called “*Preterist view*.” Listen to what they believe,

According to preterism, all prophecy in the Bible is really history. The preterist interpretation of Scripture regards the book of Revelation as a symbolic picture of first-century conflicts, not a description of what will occur in the end times. The term *preterism* comes from the Latin *praeter*, meaning “past.” Thus, preterism is the view that the biblical prophecies concerning the “end times” have already been fulfilled - in the past. Preterism is directly opposed to futurism, which sees the end-times prophecies as having a still-future fulfillment.

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/preterist.html>

Listen carefully to what Jesus said of this time, just a few verses and you tell me if this was fulfilled in 70 A. D. In Matthew 24:27-30 we are told, **“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”**

That has not happened but it will! This is still future, the Second Coming of Jesus and this time He will set up His Kingdom and rule and reign for 1,000 years! But if you believe that this is not literal, like many do, then there is no Second Coming of Jesus either, or so they say. Foolishness!

You see, if you believe that the events spoken of here in Matthew and Mark are past, then you have to say that this is not to be taken literally, but it is symbolic of something, not sure what! Again, foolishness!

No, if we take the destruction of the Temple as being literal, and it is, then we must also say that the rest of these prophecies are also literal too and they will come to pass! They are still future as we will see!

VERSES 3-4

As they continue traveling to Bethany, passing through the Kidron Valley, they found a spot to sit down and rest on the Mount of Olives. And here some of His disciples begin to question Him about these things, when they will take place. Why? Because in their minds, when this takes place the Messiah will come and set up His kingdom, that is what they were waiting for.

Thus, Mark speaks of two of the three questions that they asked Jesus while Matthew gives us three questions. The first two that Mark speaks of are these, ***“When will these things be?”*** ***“What will be the sign of Your coming?”*** And Matthew lists the third one, ***“What will be the sign of the end of the age?”***

The first question that we see Jesus answer is this, ***“When will these things be?”*** And I think we see the answer to that question in Mark 13:5-20. Actually, Mark 13:5-27 deals with the entire Tribulation Period!

Mark 13:5-8 deals with the beginning of the Tribulation Period. Then, in Mark 13:9-18 deals with the middle portion of the Tribulation Period. And in Mark 13:19-27 He describes the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period culminating in the return of Jesus Christ!

The second question that we see Jesus answer is, ***“What will be the sign of Your coming?”*** or ***“What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”*** This is given to us in Mark 13:21-27 and it relates to the Second Coming of Jesus as we will see.



The last question that Matthew speaks of is this, “*What will be the sign of the end of the age?*” The word that Jesus used for “**end**” is the Greek word SUNTELEIA, (soon-tel’-i-ah) and it speaks of the culmination of all things, the completion of what has been spoken you might say! They are not asking when the end of the world will be but when will the end of this present age end and the establishment of Your Kingdom begin!

And I think we see Jesus answer this question as He speaks of putting away sinful man, of man’s rebellion against God in Matthew 24:32-51. You see, what the disciples were asking was not just the end of an era or some period of history, but the final end of this world system and the establishment of a new system. A moving away from darkness, away from sin and into a Kingdom filled with the light of God and they expected this to come very soon.

#### VERSES 5-8

Notice how Jesus starts this discourse, with a simple warning, “**Take heed.**” In other words; stay alert, pay attention, be careful, but why? Because of the deception that is taking place in this world! Don’t be deceived by false teachers, false Christ’s, false ideas of you being god!

I realize this is speaking of the Tribulation Period but what we are seeing today is a prelude to the deception that is coming and it is going to be great. So much so that Jesus said in Luke 18:8, “**... Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?**”

You see, the word “**deceive**” carries with it the idea of wandering aimlessly like planets do or so they thought. In other words, don’t be lost in space by these false Christ’s, by these false teachers and teachings, be careful!

There is also going to be wars, rumors of wars, more deception to fool the people. To fool them to do what? To succumb to a one-world government, a one-world religion and-so-on. And turn on the news today and what you hear is wars over here and over there. It will not end until Jesus comes back. One writer put it like this,

A government study was conducted by fifteen experts representing a wide range of disciplines, including a historian, political theorist, sociologist, economist, professor of international law, biochemist, cultural anthropologist, and industrialist. The group was told to waste no time agonizing over cultural and religious values. It was to give the same kind of treatment to the hypothetical problem of peace should peace break out as has been given to the hypothetical problems of war.

The conclusion of this blue-ribbon panel was that wars would cease if the will to make them cease was there. But since war itself is at the very root of mankind's social system, it is not likely that peace will ever be a serious goal because no substitute is known that can better stabilize and control national economies than war. History has shown war to be the foundation of every stable government - that every governing body that has failed to sustain the continuing threat of an external war has lost control of its constituency. Even the world realizes war is a necessary evil. Therefore, although generation after generation cries for peace, there cannot be true peace until the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, returns.

- Jon Courson, Jon Courson's Application Commentary New Testament, p. 276

I think James makes this clear as he tells us in James 4:1-4, **“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”** I think that is pretty clear, the heart of man is evil and thus, apart from Christ there will be wars and rumors of wars!

In Luke 21:9 we are told, **“But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.”** In other words, wars will continue on but the end is not here yet. The key is these wars will increase in frequency and intensity before the Lord returns, it will climax with His return with the Battle of Armageddon!

But, not only will wars increase, but earthquakes, famines, disease, and yet, the end is not here yet. How do I know that? Because Jesus said that these are **“the beginning of sorrows”** or the ***“beginning of birth pains.”***

You see, as a woman goes into labor, the contractions start out easy and are far apart. But as it gets closer for the delivery of the baby the pain increases in intensity and frequency until the baby is born.

The same is true here, before the Kingdom Age is born, before the King returns, Jesus Christ, these things will increase in frequency and intensity. The birth of the Kingdom is coming, keep your eyes focused upward for our redemption is drawing closer!

So these verses deal with the first 3½ years of the seven-year Tribulation Period. As we read on we will look at what takes place in the middle of the Tribulation Period and things will heat up!

### VERSES 9-18

There will be persecution against the Jewish people from the start of the Tribulation Period but as we move on it will get worse and worse as we can see. But make no mistake about it, ever since its beginnings, the church of Jesus Christ has endured persecution.

We see that all the apostles, except for John, were martyred for their faith. We see that with the early church as Stephen was martyred for his faith. And on into the Second Century where six million Christians were put to death for their faith in Jesus Christ. It happened in the inquisitions, as Rome put to death many for their faith in Jesus Christ.

And it continues on today where people in China, India, the Sudan, as well as other parts of the World are being put to death for their faith in Jesus Christ. One writer expounded on this and wrote, “According to David B. Barrett in his book *Today’s Martyrs*, some 165,000 Christians died for their faith in the year 2000. Researchers estimate that since the Day of Pentecost, more than 43 million Christians have been killed for their faith. A persecution index provided by Open Doors with Brother Andrew listed 28 countries with strong or massive persecution. In another 23 countries, Christians suffer discrimination and in some regions severe harassment.” (David Guzik)

And like I have said, speaking specifically of the Jewish people, this persecution against them will intensify during the Tribulation Period. Not only will Christians be put to death, those who have come to the faith during the Tribulation Period, but the Jews as well.

Now in verse 10, when it says that the Gospel is going to be preached to all the nations before the Lord returns, (Matthew 24:14), I don't believe that this is speaking of the church accomplishing this, even though we are to witness throughout the world with the Gospel message!

You see, in Revelation 14:6-7 we are told, **“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth- to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people - saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’”** Thus, before the Lord returns a heavenly messenger will spread the Good News to a world in darkness, everyone will have the opportunity to come to Jesus.

And in verse 11, when it talks about being arrested during the Tribulation Period for their faith, it is not ***“if”*** but ***“when”*** they arrest you! And when they were arrested for their faith, and they were, they did not have to call on the “Dream Team” of lawyers to defend them, for the Lord gave them the things they needed to say and He will give them the things to say during the Tribulation Period!

The thing I want you to see is that things are going to get worse and worse, so much so that during the Tribulation Period family members will be turning in their own relatives to the authorities for being a Christian. For those living during those days Jesus is admonishing them to hang in there, don't give up, and I think He is saying the same to us today, even though the things we are going through may be tough!

What is the key sign in all of this? It is the *Abomination of Desolation!* Now an abomination is dealing with all kinds of idolatry, wicked practices. We are told in II Kings 16:3-4 of Ahaz King of Judah and we read, **“But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; indeed he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.”** Now the abomination of desolation speaks of an idolatrous person or object that has been placed in the Temple of God to desecrate it.

In Daniel chapter 9 Daniel is told that 70 weeks or 70 seven year periods are determined upon Israel, and after 69 of those seven year periods, or 173,880 days, the Messiah would come. And we see that fulfilled to the very day as Jesus came riding into Jerusalem as the Messiah the King, the only time He did, and that was on April 6, 32 A. D., we call it Palm Sunday!

Now there is still one more seven-year period to be fulfilled to complete those 70 seven-year periods. As you study that portion of Daniel you will see that after those 69 seven-year periods the Messiah was to be **“cut off”** or literally executed for a capital crime, which happened to Jesus. Then the city of Jerusalem was to be destroyed, which occurred as the Romans came in with Titus in 70 A. D., killing some 1½ million Jews!

After all these things we read in Daniel 9:27, **“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”**

You see, here is that last seven-year period of time to be fulfilled as God told Daniel. The “**he**” is speaking of the Antichrist who makes a covenant with the nation of Israel, which most likely will be related to the rebuilding of the Temple and the sacrificial system.

Then, in the middle of that seven-year Tribulation Period, at the 3½ mark, the Antichrist will enter the rebuilt Temple, stop the daily sacrifices, both grain and blood, and demand to be worshiped as god. This is the abomination of desolation that both Daniel and Jesus spoke of, and it will come to pass!

Paul picks up on this in II Thessalonians 2:3-4 when he wrote, “**Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**”

And Matthew tells us that these people should pray that their flight from the forces of the Antichrist will not be on the Sabbath. Why? Because he is speaking to the Jewish people and Mark is writing to a primarily Roman audience, and they would not need to know that, it would be of no value to them for they could travel as far as they wanted any day of the week, so Mark leaves this out.

Thus, the warning for the Jewish people is to flee Jerusalem and head to the mountains. And many Jews will flee to the rock city of Petra in Jordan where God will preserve them for 3½ years. But, tragically, only 1/3 of the Jewish people will make it through this time of tribulation, 2/3 will be destroyed in the fire of this trial!

So these verses deal with the middle portion of the Tribulation Period. As we read on, from Mark 13:19-27, this deals with this time all the way to the end of the Tribulation Period and the return of Jesus Christ.

### VERSES 19-23

We look at the things that are happening in the world and we wonder, “Can it get any worse?” Jesus is telling us that no time in history or in the future will be as bad as this period of time known as the Great Tribulation or the last 3½ years of the seven-year Tribulation Period. In fact, He tells us that unless He stepped in and shortened those days, if He let things just continue on, man would completely wipe himself out. But He will step in before that occurs.

Let me put this into perspective for you if you are not sure how bad it will be. “In 1343 bubonic plague started to sweep across Europe. Over eight years, two-thirds of the population of Europe was afflicted with the plague, and half of those afflicted died – an incredible total of 25 million people. This coming time of **tribulation** will be worse. . . . Zbigniew Brzezinski in his book *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-first Century* (1993) sets the number of “Lives deliberately extinguished by politically motivated carnage” at between 167 million and 175 million. Most other statisticians have roughly the same estimates. Yet, Jesus said that this time of **tribulation** will be worse.” (David Guzik)

But here is the good news. Before the Tribulation Period starts, the church or bride of Christ will be removed or raptured unto the Lord as I Thessalonians chapter 4 tells us. You see, the church age comes to an end and God is then going to be dealing with the nation of Israel, completing that last seven-year period, and pouring out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world.



We read of being delivered from the wrath that is to come in I Thessalonians 1:9-10 where Paul reminds us, **“For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”**

We are waiting for Jesus to deliver us from the wrath that is to come, and as Paul said, once again in I Thessalonians, **“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** I Thessalonians 5:9. So before God’s wrath is poured out, before the Tribulation Period starts, the church is taken home to be with the Lord. We call that event the Rapture of the church. Praise the Lord for that!

Again, in I Thessalonians Paul speaks of this event that we call the rapture of the church. He wrote, **“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”** I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Paul does not want us to be ignorant about this event and yet, so many today are ignorant of it. Now here’s the thing. Paul speaks of those who have fallen asleep, they have died in Christ and those who remain, or those who are alive.

And he tells us that we *ALL* will be caught up, snatched away quickly, forcibly, but where? To meet the Lord in the air! This is the rapture of the church prior to the start of the Tribulation Period, it is when we will all get our resurrection bodies for our spirit and soul to dwell in.

When a Christian sleep's now, dies in the Lord, his soul and spirit go to be with the Lord but I don't believe we get our resurrection bodies until this period of time, the rapture. And there is no soul sleep spoken of here because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, (II Corinthians 5:8)

And if we went through the Tribulation Period, why would Paul tell us, "**Therefore comfort one another with these words**"? I Thessalonians 4:18. He wouldn't!

As Jesus continues on He is once again warning of the deception that is out there! And it will be far worse than what we see today. People claim that Jesus has come back already, He is hiding in a secret place, or that He indwells all people and we are all part of the god consciousness, or whatever goofy thing that people have come up with. Jesus warned, "**Don't believe it!**"

You see, when Jesus returns every eye will see Him! And that is what Jesus will be speaking of next, the second question, "*What will be the sign of Your coming?*" or "*What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?*" And we will look at that here in Mark 13:24-27.

VERSES 24-27

As I have said, we are now at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period, prior to and including the Lord's return. And during this time there will be cataclysmic events occurring in the heavens and on the earth.

Luke puts it this way in chapter 21 as he speaks of this time, **“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. Then He spoke to them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.’”** Luke 21:25-36.

Interestingly enough, fear has not brought the earth-dwellers to repentance but their hearts will fail them because of all this destruction or wrath that is coming upon them.

We see this in Revelation 6:12-17 where we read, **“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’”**

They know why this is happening, they just refuse to repent and turn to the Lord. Thus, they will not be able to stand before Him in their own righteousness, which is like filthy rags. How hard man’s heart can be!

One other point before we move on. When Jesus comes again all will see Him. The Jehovah Witnesses have predicated Christ’s Second Coming over and over again, and have been wrong. So to show they are not false prophets, they say He has already come, but in secret.

That is ridiculous and it goes against what the Scriptures teach. Jesus warns us in Matthew 24:27 and then verses 29-30, **“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. . . . Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”** Matthew 24:27, 29-30.

Revelation 1:7 clearly shows us this as well, **“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.”**

Those who are living during this period of time will witness the Lord’s return and every eye will see Him just as lightning flashes across the sky!

Now verse 27 is confusing for some as it reads, **“And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.”** Who are the **“elect”** the church or the Jews?

This is not speaking of the church because the focus in The Olivet Discourse is the Jewish people and not the church. So this is speaking of the Jewish people, God’s elect, that will be gathered from all over the world.

The Lord is going to gather His people and they will never be scattered again. Yes, at the 3½ year mark of the seven-year Tribulation Period the Jews will be scattered but not any longer as the Lord returns to set up His Kingdom on this earth and fulfill the promise to the Jewish people that the Messiah would rule and reign from the throne of David for 1,000 years!

And yes, we have seen Jews from all over the world return to Israel in our day, but during the Tribulation period, as I have said, the Antichrist rises up against them and they will be scattered one more time. It is only when the Lord returns that they will be regathered and remain.

In Isaiah 27:12-13 we see this spoken of, **“And it shall come to pass in that day That the Lord will thresh, From the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; And you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown; They will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, And they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, And shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.”**

And in Isaiah 11:12 we are told, **“He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.”**

The Lord will gather His people, the Jews from all over the world and they will come to Jerusalem to meet their Messiah, their King, Jesus!

And like I have said, Mark did not record the third question that they asked Jesus, **“What will be the sign of the end of the age?”** If you want to look at that one a little more look at our Thursday Matthew 24 study or our in-depth Matthew 24 study, where it took us a few weeks to go through this chapter.

VERSES 28-31

Here Jesus gives them this parable and the key to this parable is the fig tree, obviously. You see, when the leaves start coming out, those tender shoots are growing, it is a sign that summer is approaching.

So who is the fig tree or what does it represent? Some say it speaks of the nation of Israel who is illustrated many times in the Scriptures as a fig tree. Thus, in 1948, when Israel became a nation, many feel that is speaking of the budding of the fig tree, and thus summer is near! This generation will not pass away until the Tribulation Period is over and the Lord returns! Not exactly.

Now I do believe that the Jews being in the land of Israel is an important prophetic sign for us, but I don't believe that this is what Jesus is saying here.

The reason I say that is because what Luke tells us. In Luke 21:29-30 we are told, "**Then He spoke to them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.'**" Notice, not just the fig tree, but all trees! It is an agricultural reference and not a symbolic one!

When you see the false Christ's, the false prophets, the wars, the world wars, the rumors of wars, the earthquakes, the famines, diseases, the persecutions, the abomination of desolation, the cataclysmic signs in the heavens and on the earth! When these things begin to happen know that the Lord's return is close, He is at the door!

And then verses 30 and 31 of Mark 13, which again has confused some and we read, "**Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.**"

There are a couple of ways to look at this and both seem to fit. It can mean that the generation that see's these things begin to take place, the birth pains, will see the end of all this and the return or Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Also, and this is interesting to me, the word for "**generation**" in the Greek is GENE, and it can speak of a race or nationality. In other words, another sign would be that this nation of Israel, the Jews, would not ethnically pass away, be eliminated. And that in itself is a miracle.

You see, after 70 A. D. the Jews wandered without a homeland for some 1878 years and no other ethnic group has survived more than 5 generations, more than 150 years without a homeland, they have been assimilated into other groups, other cultures. But the Jews remain! Hitler tried to destroy the Jews by killing over 6 million of them, but they remain today!

And listen to what Islam and for that matter, many European countries are saying about Israel, they don't want them around, they want them out of the land. In fact, Islam wants Israel destroyed, the Jews to be wiped out!

Also, the Antichrist and his forces will try to destroy the Jews, but they will not succeed either. Thus, "**. . . this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.**" What we see is the preservation of this nation, just as the Lord said and it is a sign that the Lord's return is drawing close!

So, these Jews that see these signs, they will not pass away until the Lord comes back. So in a sense it is speaking of the Jewish people, not as fig trees but the generation that sees this will not pass away, they will not be eliminated or exterminated as a people, the Lord will come back, the Lord will save them!



VERSES 32-37

I realize that you may not agree with me on this. In fact, at one time I did not see verse 32 this way. You see, it is difficult because we have been taught a different view of what is really going on here.

First of all, who is Jesus speaking to here, the Jews or the church? He is speaking to the Jews and the coming Tribulation Period and His return! But, we have been taught that this verse is speaking of the Rapture of the church. Why? Because no man knows the day or hour that it will take place.

But if this is speaking of the Second Coming of Jesus and not the Rapture then why does Jesus say no one knows the “**day and hour**” of His Second Coming when in reality the Scriptures tell us that it is 3½ years after the abomination of desolation? And in regards to the Rapture we do not know the “**day and hour**” but we do know the seasons. So how can this be?

First of all, when Jesus spoke these words the Tribulation Period had not started so they could not count off the days from when the abomination of desolation occurred until the coming of the Lord. No one knew the day or the hour and we still don't today. Secondly, keep in mind the things that will be taking place during the Great Tribulation or those last 3½ years before the Lord returns.

As you look at the events that take place during the end of the Tribulation Period you can easily see that people are not counting off the days for the return of the Lord, they are just trying to survive.

One more point here and that is this. Don't we see in the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus' First and Second Coming in the same verse, not separated? So why can't that be the case here? Jesus is speaking to the Jews, then to the Church, and then again to the Jews?

We don't see that in the New Testament. What was hidden in the Old Testament is revealed to us in the New Testament. And the reality is, the church was a mystery until Paul revealed it to us in the New Testament.

So I believe that the Lord is speaking to the Jewish people not about the Rapture but His Second Coming.

And as we move on we once again see Jesus tell us to "**Take heed**" and not only to "**Take heed**" but to "**watch and pray . . .**" This is something all of us can do today but specifically speaking, this is to the Jews during the Tribulation Period!

As we read on Jesus gives them an illustration to help them to see what He is telling them. Jesus had given to the Jewish people the Word of God to bring people to God. And yes, during the Church Age God is working through Gentiles but keep in mind, in the Tribulation Period He is working through the Jewish people!

Thus, they are to take heed, they are to watch, they are to pray because He is coming back and things are going to get worse before they get better! Be prepared, be watching, He is coming back!

As much as this is for Jews during the Tribulation, I do think we can glean some lessons from this as well. Think of it like this. In this illustration we see Jesus as the Master who goes to a far country, heaven, leaving His servants, you and me, in charge to take care of His home. And the reason we are to be ready is because we don't know when the Master will return.

Jesus uses the Roman watch in which there were four. The evening watch, from 6 pm to 9 pm. The midnight watch, from 9 pm to midnight. The crowing of the rooster, from midnight till 3 am. And the morning watch, from 3 am to 6 am. In other words, it could happen at any time, be ready! (The Jews had the night watch broken down into 3 watches).

It truly is a shame that some Christians are not watching, they are unaware of what time it is on God's prophetic time-clock! We should be excited about His return. It should spur us on to share our faith with others. It should encourage us to get our house in order before He returns, and-so-on.

As Christians we should live each day as this is the one that the Lord will return, because it might be. That helps us to live a life that will be pleasing to the Lord. **WATCH! BE READY!**

Let me leave you this evening with these words from Paul in I Corinthians 15:50-58, **“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** May we occupy, continuing doing what God has called us to do until He returns! ***COME LORD JESUS!***