

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Mark 13:14.

Mark was a young man when Jesus died for the sins of the world, and he was blessed to have been discipled by Peter, the apostle, who not only led him to the Lord but taught him everything that Jesus had done and said. And Mark was totally moved by it. In fact, a lot of folks will name this gospel "The Gospel of Mark According to Peter." Mark really saw the servanthood of Jesus, and Mark 10:45 says, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." And that really is Mark's focus. People say, "Why do you have four gospels?" Well, for Mark it was just this focus on the servanthood of Jesus. So the book is filled with action - not so many sermons but miracles and outreach and availability and passion for the souls of men; and Jesus up at all hours of the morning and late at night and with crowds that weren't willing to listen, under all kinds of conditions; but just always reaching out with the good news of His coming.

Mark, like the rest of the other gospel writers, devotes much of his reporting to what took place on the final week of Jesus' public ministry and beyond. In fact, if you had to outline the Bible, the Bible's interested in two things - the first and the second coming of Christ - waiting for His first coming and now waiting for His second. That's really the focus of the Scriptures. And so Mark gives us great detail (along with the other gospels) about that final Passion Week beginning on that Saturday, when the Lord came to Bethany, and He was anointed by Mary (you might remember) for His burial; and then Sunday for the beginning, if you will, of that final week as the Lord came to ride into town on a donkey - triumphant entry, as the prophets had declared. And then Monday and then Tuesday; and Tuesday was a very busy day, as the Lord met with lots of groups that were there to oppose Him. He was still ministering to them. They were setting Him up, and He was loving them back. And we looked at all of the different groups that came and all. But before leaving the Temple for good, Jesus, in the afternoon, sat down in the Court of the Women, and He watched a poor lady throw in an offering that really was her entire livelihood; and, for it having been such a day of confrontation, He was so blessed to see this woman's love for God, and He pointed it out to the disciples. Well, that's really the last event that took place in town, if you will,

before the trials and all begin. And, as the Lord is leaving on Tuesday - late afternoon - I don't know if the disciples were upset or maybe His countenance showed that He knew what was coming next, but, as they went out of the Temple, Mark tells us in chapter 13 that some of the disciples pointed out how beautiful the Temple was becoming. It was in the midst of being remodeled by Herod. It would take years to finish. And I don't know if they just tried to encourage Him. "Look how beautiful the place is!" And Jesus answered, in verse 2, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Not exactly what you'd expect to hear. But they walked out of the Temple area and down through the Kidron Valley and back up the Mount of Olives to the top, where Bethany was. And early evening Jesus sat down, and four of His disciples (at least) - we are told in the gospels - came to Him and wondered about what He had said. "This beautiful place - what do You mean it's going to be torn down?" And they came with what amounted, really, to three questions, and the three questions are listed here. They're also listed in Luke 21 and in Matthew 24. But the questions are: "When is this going to take place?" (this idea that everything is going to be leveled) and "What is going to be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered in what is called the Olivet Discourse because it was given on the Mount of Olives. It is the longest sermon in Mark, by far, because Mark doesn't major on sermons. It is one of the longest in the Scriptures. It is most covered by Matthew; he covers it in two chapters - 24 and 25.

We began it a few weeks ago, before Christmas, so let me reiterate a couple things that are important for you to enter this Olivet Discourse in so you don't get side-tracked. The most important issue is that these men, these Jews, truly believed that when the Messiah came, instantly He would rule. And so when Jesus talked about the destruction of the Temple, they immediately (in their minds) said, "Well, if the Temple is destroyed, the Messiah is coming. War is going to take place, and we're going to win, and we're going to emerge victorious." They did not see the time between the first and the second coming of Jesus any more than they saw the first coming being to suffer, which is why they always fought about greatness and power and position. All the way to the last supper, that was the discussion amongst these guys. So, their understanding was it all happens at once. They didn't see a Church Age, they didn't see this Age of Grace between when God stopped dealing with national Israel and He would return to rule from there again. And so that's their question, "When, and is it soon? You say it's going to happen. What are the signs? When are You coming? When are You going to establish Your kingdom?"

They saw it all as one thing. And the context is critical because if you miss that road map, you'll end up running down a lot of roads that you really can't get back from. These are Jewish men talking to Jesus about a Jewish hope for a Jewish city and a future Messiah, and they believed it would just come immediately.

We looked at the first thirteen verses before Christmas, where we stressed to you (and you can go back and read it on your own, if you will) that the Lord answers by saying, "It's going to be awhile. Be careful. Take heed to yourself. There're going to be many coming in My name saying 'I am the One.' There're going to be wars and rumors of wars. That's going to take time. There're going to be world wars and beginnings of sorrows. And then they're going to deliver you to the councils, and you're going to be beaten. And for My sake, you're going to stand before kings as a testimony to Me. And the gospel is going to be preached to all nations." And He goes on, and He talks about length of time, if you will. And so we looked at that in great detail. There were going to be wars and earthquakes and famines. And, "The end is not yet. Just watch yourself." And then He tells them, beginning in verse 9, about the sufferings that they would endure being a witness for Him, even promising them that, when they got put on the spot for their faith in trial, they should never worry about what they have to say. The Holy Spirit who would dwell in them would give them the very words that they could speak to be a witness. All that to say that you will not find the church mentioned here per se because this is a word from God to Jews about God's dealing with Israel. But, all of the application of the prophecies that you find in here find themselves fulfilled in three different places. Number one - from here till the time that Jerusalem is destroyed in 70 A.D. by Titus and all of the suffering that the church would face as they head for this dispersal, if you will, the Diaspora, the driving out of the Jews and of the church, for that matter, out of Israel. The Church Age, in the sense that we are also warned to be careful of false prophets, because when the Lord comes for the church and the rapture takes place, then God again turns to deal through Israel. And then finally, that last seven-year period when God, in the Great Tribulation, works through the nation again to reach the world, and really the center of His work is through Israel again. So you won't find the church per se, but the warnings are before 70 A.D., while the Church Age is going, and the Great Tribulation. It's this dualistic kind of prophecy.

Let me read to you something out of Luke 21. This is what Jesus says, and it's in light of what we're going to read here in a moment. It says this, verse 20, " 'But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is

near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.' " Now that's a specific prophecy before 70 A.D., when the nation is surrounded by the Romans.

Here's what we read in our text this morning. Same sermon, verse 14, " 'So when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not' (let the reader understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.' " Now, two very different scenarios, and yet they are presented by the Lord as one. One that warns very much about the invasion of the Romans and the armies surrounding the people. "Get out of town. Your desolation is near. Destruction is coming upon Jerusalem. It is the Gentile era." And then, as you look at verses 14-20, it is the injunction to flee. They're similar, but the cause is very different. This time, it is the "abomination of desolation" and the challenge to, verse 14, read with understanding. This isn't the troops that have surrounded the city; this is an abomination that has occurred that should be the signal to the Jews to get out of Dodge and run for your life.

So, we want to stick with Mark. The "abomination of desolation" is a subject that you should probably understand, if you don't. It is mentioned three times in Daniel's prophecy. It occurred once already, in fact, in 167 B.C. There was a fellow named Antiochus Epiphanes. He was the eighth Seleucid king. He was actually named Antiochus IV. And when they overthrew Israel, at the time, he thought he was the incarnation of Zeus. He took a pig into the Temple and the altar. He defiled the place, and battles ensued; 80,000 Jews were murdered, 40,000 others were taken slaves. And then that was dealt with, and God delivered Israel from

this wicked man, and Hanukkah is the celebration of God's deliverance of them. But there is far more than that.

In Daniel 9:24, the four verses there that speak about God's dealing with Israel as a nation - this is what it says, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a" (dispersion or with a) "flood." And then it says, "And till the end of the war desolations are determined. 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." So, that's the promise of God to Israel.

And, as we go back, and I think we've gone over that prophecy several times, from the time that Daniel began to pray for God, at 90 years old, "God, what can I do when You bring Israel back into the land?" God then sends the angel to him to say, "This is God's dealing with Israel over the next seventy weeks." The word is "heptad." It means years, seven years. So God said to Daniel, "There are going to be 490 years between you, now, and the return of the Lord, the return of Jesus." Now Daniel didn't know it was Jesus, but in the return of the Messiah. He said seven weeks and then sixty-two weeks and, indeed, 483 years = sixty-nine weeks of seven. You can follow it on the calendar: from the day that the order was given by Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to Nehemiah in 445 B.C. until the day that Jesus rode into town that Sunday, April 6, 32 A.D. And then the Lord said, "I'm going to turn and give this to another nation who's going to bear fruit." And God's effective dealing with Israel as a nation to reach the world stopped. Sixty-nine weeks were done - right to the day that the Lord presented Himself; which left this one seven-year period, which we know will take place again once this Age of Grace, this interval between His first and second coming, takes place - the one that the disciples didn't see. It'll be a seven-year Great Tribulation period. The rapture will begin the clock moving. When you know the day of the rapture, you'll

know the day of the second coming exactly to the day: 7 years x 360 days a year according to the Babylonian calendar, which was used in prophecy.

So, there is this time gap. And when you're taken away, there's going to be a seven-year period, and the Antichrist is going to come to power. But in the middle of that week, as Daniel writes in chapter 9, in the midst of those seven years - at the three-and-a-half-year mark, the 42-month mark - the Antichrist, who has been Israel's friend, *per se*, will turn out to be a villain of all hell. And he will come to the Temple, which has been rebuilt and is being used, and will stop the offerings and will demand to be worshipped as God. And all that you read in Revelation 6-19 takes place in the last half of that Great Tribulation. We read here if the Lord hadn't shortened that time, maybe from seven years to the final three and a half years, no one would have survived. But for the elect's sake, for His people's sake, He has indeed done that. So the seventieth week of Daniel is that seven-year period that follows the Church Age and then concludes with the second coming of Jesus to rule and reign for a thousand years. Now, Daniel says in chapter 9:27 that this ruler will arise out of the ashes of the old Roman Empire. In fact, notice he says the fellow that is coming will destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end will be with the dispersion, and the end of the war will be determined. And then it just stops, and it says he shall make a covenant with them for seven years, for one week, "heptad."

And in the midst of that week - and I suspect, as you read Revelation, that one of the ways in for the Antichrist with Israel is going to be he's going to figure out a way to build a Temple upon the Temple Mount area without all hell breaking loose upon the earth. He's going to come and be a man of solutions, and he'll bring peace to a religiously-difficult region. You'll be in heaven. You'll be all right. But it is in the middle of that week that he causes the worship and the sacrifices at the Temple to stop. He presents himself as God. He says, "You worship me, you take the mark or you die," and, indeed, many will die. So, that assumes that the Temple is going to be rebuilt, and it hasn't been, by the way, standing on the Temple Mount since 70 A.D. when it was destroyed. There has been no Temple. Now, there is a huge society in Israel called The Temple Society that has millions upon millions of dollars given to it every year that are now building all of the things that are necessary to have worship and a Temple. They are a radical group. You probably wouldn't believe their politics. But they are certainly determined to see a Temple rebuilt. In the midst of this, though, and the reference here in verse 14, is the Antichrist comes and says, "No more worshipping God. From now on, you worship

me." It's an abomination that will bring desolation to the planet, to the people. And the word "abomination," usually associated with idolatry or sacrilege, is here identified in verse 14 to the Antichrist. So, reader understand. Right? Matthew would write (24:15), " 'When you see the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, be careful as you read.' " Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "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 worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). And you get to Revelation 13, and it's borne out at that midway mark, where the abomination of desolation takes place. So here's God's warning. He had warned them about prior to 70 A.D. He's told us about the false prophets as we wait. But, for the nation, this is something that they need to be careful of, and as a people. Satan, according to Revelation 12:9, is cast out of heaven for good, no more access. And what he does is he turns on the nation of Israel and seeks to take out his anger upon her. In fact, you can read in Revelation 12:5 these words, "She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman" (the one who bore the male Child, Israel if you will) "fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days," three and a half years. Verse 13, "Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." And so the earth helped the woman, the earth opened its mouth, swallowed up the flood which the dragon spewed out of its mouth. In other words, this time God will protect His people in these last three and a half years.

So notice the warning here. " 'When you see this "abomination" ' " (it hasn't taken place yet), " 'then you should flee, run, and take off. Flee. When you see the "abomination," then let those who are in Judea flee.' " In verse 14, " 'If you're in Judea, go to the mountains.' " There's an urgency. " 'There are circumstances that might hinder you. Pray it isn't during times that you should be slowed down. And watch out!' " The only destination given by God to the people to flee to the mountains is this prophecy that we read to you out of Revelation 12. The place in the Old Testament is called Sela. It means "rock city." It is a place in Edom. Isaiah 16 mentions it. Today it is called Petra, in Jordan, and it is most Bible

scholars' belief that when the Antichrist comes in that way, at that three-and-a-half-year mark, that the Lord is going to gather much of His people today to Petra. If you've ever been there, it is a totally defensible narrow-entrance passageway that will be God's sheltering of His people. So we read, "Go to the mountains. Flee to the mountains. If you're on the housetop," typical Jewish practice of flat-roof homes, "don't go back into the house. Just take off. If you're in the field, don't bother going back for your clothes. If you hear about this abomination, get out of town. Pregnancy and nursing could hinder your flight." Matthew even adds, in chapter 24:20, "Pray that this flight doesn't have to take place on the Sabbath." So, again, God's Word to Israel about what is coming upon them.

Verse 18 (Mark 13), " 'And pray that your flight may not be in winter.' " So, the warnings of Jesus to those living anywhere near the Temple is geocentric. By that, I mean it's given to Judah, it talks about the Temple, it speaks of those in Jerusalem - get out of town. And the reason is not the Roman invasion, 70 A.D., but the "abomination of desolation" that the Antichrist will bring to the Temple that is functioning there in the middle of the Great Tribulation. Verse 19, " 'For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation,' " the most horrible time of trials - Revelation 6-19 (you can write that right in the margin). And thank God that, during this time of judgment, you and I will be in heaven. In fact, we are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that we have not been appointed to wrath but to obtain salvation through Christ Jesus. And that's where we're going to be. We're going to be with Him as this judgment of God is poured out upon the world.

If you have read the book of Revelation, you know that it is in chronological order in the sense that chapter 1 introduces us to the Lord and to the One who is to judge; chapters 2 and 3 are the Church Age - Jesus' letters to the church; chapter 4:1 begins with the words, in Greek, "*meta tauta*," after these things - and so we get a picture in chapters 4 and 5 of the church and the believers in heaven singing songs that only the church can sing; and then in chapter 6, these seals begin to be loosed, and the judgment begins to fall. In fact, I think when the Lord gave John that vision, He said (to John) in chapter 1:19, " 'Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.' " And so God gives to John a layout, and we have it as well, and Jesus is warning of it here.

So, how bad will this be? Jesus quotes chapter 12:1 of Daniel when He said "unless the time had been shortened," from seven years, I suspect, to three and a half years. Now, who are the elect? At least in this passage, the elect are the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. Isaiah 45:4, "For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect." Sometimes in the New Testament the Lord calls you elect, as believers. Colossians 3:12 comes to mind. "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies." Chosen by God. And in these days, many will come to Jesus. In fact, it is my personal belief, and I think biblically correct, that there'll be more people that get saved in those last three and a half years than have been saved since Adam and Eve showed up, at least numbers-wise. But, what a time of great suffering, and you will probably have to give your life to follow the Lord. Today, you just have to follow the Lord. Oh, you give Him your life but not quite in this manner.

So, the warning again. Verse 21, " 'Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "Look, He is there!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.' " And you can read about Satan's wicked ways, there in the book of Revelation, " 'But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.' " So be on your toes, be on the alert. I'm telling you ahead of time so you can guard against this mark of the beast and be fooled by this man.

Verse 24, " 'But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 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.' " So, the end of the tribulation is horrifying, but it leads to the return of Jesus and, for that matter, you with him. Matthew and Luke both write about the distress and the perplexity for those left upon the earth and the rebellion that they engage in, and then face the Lord. But notice in verse 26, though He had come to die the first time, now He comes to rule and to reign. He goes from a babe in the manger to the King of Kings. He gathers the nation together against Him. The battle of Armageddon is in Revelation 19. It is over in a minute. The Lord says, I think it's, "Knock it off." I'm pretty sure those are the original Greek. Or, "You've had it" or something to that effect. "I'm here." It won't take much.

And then, verse 27, He will reign from Jerusalem as the angels are sent to bring all the Jews back to the city, even as the prophets have declared. Isaiah wrote (11:12), "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" to Jerusalem. And so that's coming. "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him" (Revelation 1:7). Paul said to the Romans (11:26), "Then all Israel will be saved" because the Deliverer will come out of Zion. He'll turn ungodliness away from Jacob, and the children of Israel will see God, and they will believe in Him.

So, Luke ends this portion (and we'll stop here this morning) by saying (21:28), "When you see these things begin to happen, lift up your eyes. Your redemption is drawing near." If, indeed, the Temple needs to be there so the Antichrist can defile it (and certainly it will be built during those first three and a half years), we've got a lot to believe in terms of what days we live in. Israel has been in the land for sixty-some years now, sixty-nine years. They are there for good. They're not leaving. The Lord has put them there. They will go when God protects them, but they will be called back. And if the Great Tribulation is near, the rapture is even closer, isn't it, because that's got to happen first. I don't think you'll ever see the Antichrist or know who he is. If you would, then I guess you'd be looking for the Antichrist, not Jesus Christ. But you are called to look up, right? He's coming. And it is when you're taken out, then he'll be revealed. So, are we close? Man, I think so. In everything that we are able to take biblically and apply to our lives today, our redemption is drawing near. You might want to read the book of Revelation in preparation - especially how heaven looks - and learn that song in Revelation 5 so you don't look goofy. You don't want to show up going, "What song is this, man? I don't....." It's right there in the song book! You just don't want to show up and feel out of place, and then they'll go, "Where'd you go to church?" You go, "Morningstar." That won't help us at all. (Laughing)

Next week, we will finish this sermon - on Tuesday of Passion Week. And this really takes us to Thursday. There's nothing, really, in the Bible much about Wednesday. So, the Lord leaves the Temple area for good, He gives the boys this view of the future, and then He heads for Passover meal and the Garden of Gethsemane and the six illegal trials during the night and then to the cross to save us from our sin.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

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