

The Beginning of the End

[Mark 13:1-8](#)

The passage of Scripture before us today is known as *The Olivet Discourse*. This sermon, which was delivered by Jesus, is also recorded in [Matt. 24-25](#) and in [Luke 21](#). In this sermon Jesus talks about the end of time and the events which surround the end of the world.

This passage is one of the most difficult to interpret in the New Testament. Because of this fact, various false teachings about the end times, the Second Coming of Christ, and even about salvation have arisen.

We want to take our time as we move through these verses. We want to get a correct understanding of what the Lord Jesus is trying to teach us.

In order to properly understand this prophecy, we need to keep a few truths in mind.

- First, this passage never mentions the church or the Rapture. Why? It doesn't mention these things because this passage was not written to the church, it was written to the nation of Israel. This is primarily a Jewish prophecy. Still, there are many truths we can glean from these verses.
- Second, this prophecy covers a tremendous expanse of time. Over 2,000 years of human history are in view here. These verses contain prophecies that have been partially fulfilled and that will be completely fulfilled in the future. So, we will be looking backwards and forwards at the same time.
- Third, as with any prophetic passage of Scripture, we need to move cautiously and with the knowledge that no one has all the answers. No Bible scholar has ever been able to solve all the theological riddles hidden within The Olivet Discourse. Thus, we must approach these great verses with a humble heart, knowing that none of us knows it all.

With those thoughts in mind, let's listen in on this conversation between Jesus and His disciples, as He teaches them about the events that will characterize the end of time. I trust that what the Lord says here will be a challenge and a help to us as we study this text together.

I would like to preach today on *The Beginning Of The End*. I want you to see *A Strange Prediction; A Startling Panorama* and *A Sobering Promise*. Let's look at these *truths* and think about *The Beginning Of The End*.

I. A Strange Prediction

Mar 13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*

Mar 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, **Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**

A. The Temple and Its Design

Mar 13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*

Jesus is leaving the Temple. For the last two chapters Mark has been showing us Jesus and His encounters there with the religious Jews. It has been a tense time to Jesus and His disciples. Surely, they are baffled by the Lord's words and behavior in the Temple. They probably thought the Jesus would try to win the favor of the Jews and the Jewish leaders. Instead, Jesus did everything in His power to expose them as religious phonies.

Now, their time in the Temple is over, and one of the disciples tries to lighten the mood. After all the negativity they have experienced, this disciple wants to say something positive. So, he calls the Lord's attention to the Temple, its construction and its beauty.

The Temple in Jerusalem was considered to be among the most spectacular wonders of the ancient Roman Empire. The original temple constructed by Solomon was a magnificent building that took seven years and many millions of dollars to build. This temple was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in about 600 BC.

When the Jews returned to the homeland 70 years later, they constructed the second temple. This temple served the Jews for nearly 500 years, but by the time of the New Testament, it had suffered great damage due to the passage of time.

When King Herod assumed the throne of Israel, he wanted to gain favor with the Jews. So, he offered to rebuild their temple. They accepted and in 18 BC, the work began.

By the time of Jesus, the work had been underway some 46 years, according to [John 2:20](#), and would continue for another 20 years. The temple that Jesus and His men visited was an amazing building.

It sat atop Mount Moriah and literally dominated the skyline of the ancient city. The temple mount covered some one-sixth of the land area of Jerusalem. The temple itself was 172 feet long and 20 stories high. It could be seen from many miles away and from anywhere in the city.

You will notice that the disciple who spoke called the Lord's attention to “*the stones*” and “*the buildings*”. Let's talk about those two descriptions.

The stones that made up Herod's Temple were enormous. Some were forty feet long, eighteen feet high and fifteen feet wide. They were cut by hand from pure white limestone, and fit together so tightly and perfectly that a sheet of paper could not be inserted between the stones.

The doors, walls and even the floors of the Temple were overlaid with pure gold. There were jewels, ornate carvings, and many awe inspiring sights. It was said that when the sun came up over Jerusalem, you could not stand to look at the Temple because of the light gleaming from its golden walls. Anything that was not covered with gold was the purest of white. Whether the Temple was seen during the day or at night, it was a sight that no one ever forgot.

Like every other Jew, this disciple was impressed by the Temple. He was proud that it was a part of his nation and his religion. So, he calls the Lord's attention to the building and its wonders.

B. The Temple and Its Destruction

Mar 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, **Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.**

The response of Jesus is somewhat strange. Jesus hears the exclamation of this disciple and responds by telling him that the temple he loves so dearly will eventually be dismantled and destroyed.

This was literally fulfilled in 70 AD when the Roman general Titus and his army conquered the city. Titus ordered his men to preserve the temple, but the building was gutted by a fire set by one of his soldiers. As a result, the general ordered the temple and the city totally destroyed. The Romans dismantled every stone in the building to get to the gold that melted into the cracks during the fire. Today, there is not a single stone left from the great temple Herod built.

II. A Startling Panorama

A. The Disciples and Their Request

Mar 13:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

Mar 13:4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

After they have gone out of the temple and the city, Jesus led His men up the Mount of Olives. This mountain stood some 150 feet higher than the city below. It offered a commanding view of the temple and its grounds.

As Jesus sat there on the mountain, He is approached by four of His disciples. The two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, and John and James, came to Jesus with a question. Apparently, the disciples are baffled by what they heard Jesus say about the destruction of the temple. They want to know what He is talking about, so they come to Him for an explanation.

B. The Lord and His Revelation

These men come asking the same questions people still ask about the end times. Everyone wants to know “*when*” it will happen, and “*what*” will be the signs that it is here. All you have to do to guarantee a good crowd in any service is to announce that you will preach on the end times. People will come to hear that.

Jesus answers their last question in these verses. Later in the chapter, He will answer their first question. Today, we want to consider our Lord's response to the question about what the signs will be, as the end of time approaches.

The first thing to note is the potential of deception.

Mar 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, **Take heed lest any man deceive you:**

Jesus warned His men that they needed to beware of deception. Even the disciples could be drawn away by the things they might hear and see. That potential still exists.

That is why you and I need to be grounded in the Word of God. We need to be familiar with what the Bible says and what we believe. We need to have our doctrine nailed down tight in our hearts, so that when the deceptions come, we can be faithful to stand for the Lord. Jesus continues by telling them that:

1. There Will Be False Messiahs –

Mar 13:6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and shall deceive many.

Jesus said that many false Christ's would come along and draw many away into deception. By the time of Jesus, several Jews had come along claiming to be the Messiah. There were some living even during the time of Christ. Many more have followed down through the years.

Act 5:36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

Act 5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

This passage mentions two would-be Messiahs. One was named Theodus. He claimed that he could part the Jordan River. He deceived about four hundred people and led them to their deaths. Another was named Judas the Galilean. He was a radical anti-Roman revolutionary and he founded the Zealot movement in Israel. One of the Lord's disciples, Simon the Zealot, was one of his followers.

After the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus many more would-be Messiahs came to prominence in Israel. One was a man named Simon Bar-Kochba. He started a rebellion that lasted three years and cost thousands of lives in Israel. His revolt led to a harsh Roman crackdown that left Jerusalem in utter ruins.

Others included Moses of Crete. He claimed that he would part the Mediterranean Sea and lead his followers across dry land from the island of Crete to Israel. Many leapt from the cliffs at his command and were drowned in the sea.

In the 1100's a man named Moses Al-Dar'i told his followers to sell all their possessions because Messiah was coming at Passover in 1127. Passover came and went and his followers were left destitute.

In 1666 a man claimed to have heard the voice of God declaring that he was the son of God. He led his followers to the city of Constantinople and was arrested by the Turkish Sultan. The Sultan ordered him to either prove that he was the Messiah or be executed. The would-be Messiah promptly converted to Islam.

In our own era many so-called Messiahs have paraded across the stage of history. Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy, and Sun Myung Moon come to mind. Many can remember Jim Jones, the founder of The People's Temple, and the nearly 1,000 people he led to commit mass suicide in 1978. And right here in Texas, who can forget David Koresh founder of the Branch Davidians, and the fiery siege on that compound in 1993.

As the end of time approaches, there will be more and more people who will step forward claiming to be the savior of the world. Beware that you are not deceived by their slick words and evil deception. The appearance of such people is merely a sign that the end is approaching. Jesus continued by telling the disciples that:

2. There Will Be Wars –

Mar 13:7 *And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.*

Our world has been marked by war since the beginning of time. According to Will Durant, in the 3,421 years of recorded history, there have only been 268 years of peace. This figure does not take into account the wars that were not recorded. The history of our world is one of war. Jesus said that wars and rumors of war would increase as the end of time approached.

We are seeing that prove true in our day. In fact this very thing has sparked conversation this week, with the war in Israel at the forefront. Wars ravage our planet, even as man claims to be climbing ever higher on the ladder of intelligence, compassion and peace.

Jesus cautioned us against getting caught up in the wars we see raging around us. When the United States invaded Iraq, many believed it was the end of time. When the Russian – Ukraine war began, many again believed it was the end of time. When Hamas attacked Israel this last week, the internet is flooded with modern day prophets spouting about how this will be the start of WW3 and the end. But look at verse 7.

Jesus said, “*these things must needs be.*” That is, God is using the terrible tragedy of war to shape the world for the coming of His Son. God uses the wrath of men for His Own glory! Do not be dismayed by warfare, it is merely God moving His pieces into place for the end game. Jesus goes on to say:

3. There Will Be Constant Upheaval In The World

Mar 13:8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

Jesus tells us that as long as the world stands, there will be strife among the nations. We should not be overly concerned about this either. Again, it is merely a sovereign God preparing the world for the appearance of His Son.

Yet, when we hear the saber rattling of Iran, Russia, China and North Korea, it tends to make us a little afraid. We start thinking about the end of time. All of these things are just a part of living in this world. As the end approaches, we will see an increase in this kind of activity. We must not allow these things to disturb us. Look at the last part of verse 8.

3. There Will Be An Increase In Earthquakes

Mar 13:8 ...and there shall be earthquakes in divers places,

This world is no stranger to earthquakes. Scientists tell us that more than 13 million people have died in earthquakes over the past 4,000 years. We saw with our own eyes what an earthquake can do when a powerful quake occurred under the Pacific Ocean in December of 2003. That earthquake spawned a tsunami that killed 300,000 people!

In 1811-1812 there was a series of great earthquakes in Arkansas that rearranged the landscape of the area; caused rivers to change their courses; filled the skies with dirt and ash; and sparked many fires.

On May 18, 1980 a volcano named Mount St. Helen's in Washington State erupted. This eruption was triggered by a violent earthquake that caused a rockslide comprised of one-half cubic mile of rock. As the summit and north slope of that volcano slid down her sides, pressure was released inside the volcano — where super hot liquid water immediately flashed to steam. The northward-directed steam explosion released energy equivalent to 20 million tons of TNT, which toppled 150 square miles of forest in six minutes. In Spirit Lake, north of the volcano, an enormous water wave, initiated by one-eighth cubic mile of rockslide debris, stripped trees from slopes as high as 850 feet above the pre-eruption water level. The total energy output, on May 18, was equivalent to 400 million tons of TNT - approximately 20,000 Hiroshima-size atomic bombs. The explosion showered towns as far away as 250 miles with volcanic ash.

Just this last week 2 earthquakes, one measuring 6.3 struck in Afghanistan, flattening towns and killing an estimated 3000. News reports say that 90% of those killed were women and children.

From October 8th – 14th of this year, Alaska has experienced 10 earthquakes ranging in magnitude from 3.3 to 4.4. They have been centered around Fairbanks, Juneau, and Unalaska.

Earthquakes are increasing in their frequency and their intensity. They will continue to do so as the end of time approaches. But, we should not be disturbed by such activity. Jesus said it would be this way!

4. There Will Be Famines–

Mar 13:8 ...and there shall be famines and troubles ...

As of May 26th 2023, according to World Vision, 828 million people, roughly 10% of the global population, go to bed hungry. Every 3.6 seconds someone dies of starvation. Every year 15 million children die of starvation and of hunger related illness. 1.3 billion people live on less than \$1.00 of income per day. Another 3 billion have survive on less than \$3.00 per day. Famines devastate the poor nations of the world, and we are just one bad harvest away from starvation here in America.

Famines will also increase as the end nears. A 2023 report reveals that 783 million people faced hunger in 2022 with a mid range of 735 million, This represents an increase of 122 million people compared to 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic. The numbers have increased to over 800 million through the halfway point of this year and are expected to continue rising. Do not be dismayed by these things. Jesus said it would be this way.

5. There Will Be Troubles Of Every Kind –

Mar 13:8 ...and there shall be famines and troubles:...

In Matthew's account of this conversation, he tells us that these troubles will be “*pestilences*”. There will be an upsurge in disease and plagues as the end times approach.

Medieval Europe was afflicted by the “*black death*”. Whole villages were destroyed by that plague. It rates as number one on the list of the worst plagues in history, affecting 30-60% of the European population. Other plagues have swept through cities and nations leaving millions dead in their wake. Think back to the Spanish Influenza outbreak during World War I. 25 million people died with the flu in a world without overnight, intercontinental air travel. Three times more people died of the flu during World War I than actually died in battle!

Just stop to think of the AIDS epidemic. It is estimated that 70% of the people in Africa are HIV positive. Think of the SARS and Bird Flu scares. Think of the horrors of viruses like Ebola. Covid-19 rates number 5 on the worst plagues in history list with an estimated 32 million deaths. There are killer diseases out there just waiting for an opportunity to devastate the human race. An outbreak of deadly disease in our world has the potential to kill hundreds of millions of people in a just a few short weeks. An outbreak like that would shut down society as we know.

But, we must not allow that kind of thing to fill us with fear. Jesus said that we would see diseases and pestilence and trouble of every kind increase as the end approached.

III. A Sobering Promise

Mar 13:8 ...these are the beginnings of sorrows.

After telling His men some of the things that will cause people to believe the end is near, Jesus lets them know that they can't really know when the end will come. Jesus tells them that when

they see these things, they are just “*the beginning of sorrows*”. These men were looking for signs. What Jesus gave them were not signs at all; they were non-signs.

That phrase means “*the beginning of the birth pangs*.” Nearly every woman here who has given birth would tell us that when those first contractions strike, they are just an indicator of a long, hard time ahead.

Jesus wants His people to know that He is coming. That was His promise while He was here.

Joh 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

Joh 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there ye may be also*.

That was the promise of the angels when He ascended to Heaven.

Act 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Act 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Act 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

That was the promise of the Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

He has given us these promises, but, He does not want us to get caught up in speculating when that day might be.

The Lord wants His people to live their lives in the following manner. He wants us to work like He is never coming. He wants us to live like He might come at any second. We are not to be caught up in guessing about when the Lord might or might not appear. We are not to be looking for signs, but for the Savior!

If you are not a believer today, the things Jesus mentioned here ought to serve as a wakeup call for you. The fact is, Jesus Christ is coming. The world will go into a time of terrible tribulation. Billions will die due to war, disease, starvation and other terrible plagues. The only way to miss that horrible time is to be ready when the Lord Jesus returns for His people.

Are you ready for Jesus to come? Are you ready to face death? Have you been saved by the grace of God?

Jesus is coming! But, things are likely to get tough for His people before He does. Let us not be deceived by the signs of the times. Let us determine in our hearts that we will obey His Word and live for Him until He comes for us either in the Rapture or in the departure we call death. As we go into this time of invitation, if you want to talk to the Lord about your walk with Him, please come!

If you have never trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, I challenge you talk to us about those classes today.