

Deliverance From Deception

Deliverance

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Mark 13. As you're turning toward the end of actually the shortest of the four gospel accounts, Mark 13, I want to invite those of you that may be guests or visitors with us alongside a journey. Now you may have missed the first part of the journey but you're here toward the end of it as we're walking through the most action packed yet shortest account of the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ in the gospel of Mark.

Now as we're walking through, it is more than just the chronology of his ministry, it's more than just the biographies of the individuals whose lives he changed forever, in fact, one of the things that we've been seeing all throughout the gospel of Mark from the very first chapter until today, is that every encounter, every person, every situation, every message, every miracle at the hands and at the voice of Jesus ends up bringing about deliverance. Now we hear that word in our context today and rightfully so it makes us a little uncomfortable but the word "deliverance" simply means "to be set free." It means to have whatever is holding you back or keeping you in bondage removed. It can also mean to be taken out of a situation that is detrimental and placed in one that is desirable.

Today, as we come to Mark 13, we're going to look at a situation or a subject matter that we all need deliverance from. As we turn to chapter 13, I want to welcome you to one of the most revered sections in all of the gospel accounts. If you have a study Bible, you'll notice in the notes it parallels Luke 21, Matthew 24. You and I today are going to make a journey to the Mount of Olives where Jesus Christ is there with a multitude of his followers. He is going to communicate some of the most strategic and pointed words regarding what we refer to as the Second Coming, the end of days, the last days. And as we walk through this passage today, hear me clearly: everything he says is going to happen as he said it, however he begins his entire message by making this statement, "Do not be deceived." In other words, you and I today, we fall prey, we fall victim day after day of being deceived. We are unduly persuaded. We're misled. We have information twisted and turned and we end up looking down the road and we're in a place we shouldn't be because somebody deceived us.

So as we look through these issues regarding what we know as the Second Coming, I want us to see the thread of deliverance. Jesus Christ is going to communicate to us today how to be delivered from deception. Beginning in verse 1 of chapter 13, it says,

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! 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. 3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? 5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: 6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 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. 8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. 9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. 10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

It's quite an interesting start to one of the most famous messages Jesus Christ ever gave. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, there will be wars, there will be pestilence, all these things, but he began with, "Be not deceived." Why is it that this is how Jesus began this very famous message? And I believe we must go back to verse 1 and we must see who initiated the sermon. What was the initiation of this? What caused this incredible dialog to take place where Jesus saw it necessary to bring a select group of people up to the Mount of Olives and give them a play-by-play of the events of the future?

Verse 1 it says, "he went out of the temple, one of his disciples." Now that's very important. Not a group of them, not a couple of the brothers, one of them. Notice what he refers to him, he says, "Master." Now if you read the parallel passages in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, it doesn't give the specifics that we have here in Mark 13 but allow me to extrapolate upon them. There is only disciple in the gospel accounts that refers to Jesus as Master and his name is Judas. All the others refer to him as Lord but Judas calls him Master.

Now why is this important? Because we know who Judas was, we know his activities, we know his actions and we know that he desired to deceive. Now Judas is one of those interesting characters in scripture for a lot of different reasons but allow me to give a little backstory on who he is because that will help us understand why Jesus says, "Do not be deceived."

In the early part of Jesus' ministry, the disciples have been called, I mean, we're in the earliest days, just a few miracles have taken place, just a few messages, and all of a sudden there in John 6 there's people making excuses, "We've got better things to do. We've got important things to do." They began to fall by the wayside and basically the disciples begin to brag about themselves, "Hey, look at us. We're not going anywhere." And Jesus makes this statement in verse 70 of John 6, he says, "Oh, I've called you unto myself but one of you is a devil." Now can we just go ahead and agree that is not a compliment? He didn't say one of you is kind of sideways. He didn't say one of you is going to make a really poor decision in about three years. He didn't say one of you has a problem with money, finances and stuff. He says one of you is a devil.

Then you get to the very last night of Jesus' earthly ministry, it's the garden of Gethsemane. We know the famous story. He goes there about midnight, waiting on "Judas to betray him," and while he's there in John 17 he talks about that he has done all the Father has asked him to do, he prays for the disciples, he prays for you, he prays for me, but in verse 12 of John 17, Jesus makes this statement, he says, "Father, all that you've given me are saved except the son of perdition," speaking of Judas. You say, "Well, why is that important?" Because in 2 Thessalonians 2, that title is only used one other place in the Bible and it's referring to the one day coming Antichrist.

Now why is this important? Because when we look at the character of Judas, particularly in this passage, at minimum we have to admit he's walking in the footsteps of the original enemy, the devil himself, and he is foreshadowing the Antichrist at best. And are not those two incidences that have the greatest deception? I mean, think about what the word means, to unduly persuade, to mislead us. What did the devil do in the garden of Eden? He actually talks us into thinking that we knew more than God did. He actually presented a bunch of information, he twisted it just enough to persuade us that that one tree was better than all the others combined.

Think about the misleading, think about the persuasion. You go to the other side of the historical spectrum, the Bible speaks about a character who's going to show up one day, we call him the Antichrist. Did you know that the word Antichrist, by the way, it's found in 1 John 2, that word is not even in the book of Revelation, in fact, in the book of Revelation he's called the beast, not a term of endearment. But nonetheless, the term Antichrist, do you know what it means? It doesn't mean red suit, horns and a tail. It means one who imitates or comes as a false Christ. When we talk about the Antichrist, he is going to one day be the great deceiver. In fact, 2 Thessalonians 2 says he comes in all power, signs, lying wonders, one day will go into the temple in Jerusalem and claim he is God.

So this whole message begins by a person voicing a concern. He's called a devil. He's called the son of perdition. He walks in the shadow of. He is foreshadowing the other. It's not just the initiation but notice the invitation that is given. Notice verse 3, "as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately." Now that last word is very important to the context here. Everything that we're about to read was only given to four people. It was not given to the

world at large. He did not break bread, feed the multitude and say, "By the way, while you're here let me share with you some very important information." There's only four individuals there and who they are is very critical to the context. You see, when you begin to go and look at the impact of Jesus' ministry quantifiably, you'll notice there's some very strategic numbers that are used. Now we know that he fed the masses and he preached unto untold thousands but in 1 Corinthians 15, it says that when he rose from the dead, Jesus Christ presented himself to about 500 people on purpose. In other words, there were 500 folks that had had some type of interaction with him strategically that he said, "These individuals need to see me risen from the dead."

If we're going to kind of bring this sphere in a little bit closer, according to Acts 1, it says that those who Jesus said to wait in the Upper Room for the Pentecost event were about 120 plus the women. So again the sphere is getting a little bit closer. Then we have these accounts in scripture where Jesus has people go out 2 x 2 into the community and there was a group of 70. And it gets even closer, the 12, the disciples. So it's worked from 500 to 120 to 70, now all of a sudden we have these 12 men, we know them as the disciples, the apostles, but there are what we call the big three. In fact, the Apostle Paul called them the pillars of the faith: Peter, James and John. These were the three that would be in the garden of Gethsemane, although they fell asleep three times, they were at least there. These are the three that are on the mount of transfiguration when Jesus displayed his glory. These were the three that were in the inner chamber when the young girl was brought back to life. These are, for lack of better terms, the most innermost sphere of Jesus' impact and influence. But look, look at verse 3. Who's there? Peter, James, John and Andrew. This is important to the story because this is the only time you see these four guys mentioned in a separate group setting.

So why would Jesus invite these four? Why would he go beyond the "big three"? Why would he not include all of the 12? Why these four? I think it's interesting that as you begin to walk through the names, you know James and John were brothers, Peter and Andrew were brothers. I don't think it had anything to do with their sibling relationships as much as whom is there.

Think about John for just a moment. John was the beloved apostle. Not only do we have the gospel of John, the letters of John, but he's the one on the island of Patmos that the Lord gave us all the end times scenarios about. He's the one that saw the visions. He's the one that saw the four horsemen of the apocalypse. All that book of Revelation stuff all came through the vessel known as John.

But who started it all? Who was the vessel that Jesus Christ would use to initiate what we know as the church? It was Peter. I mean, here they are at Pentecost, thousands of people gathered in Jerusalem, who was it that voiced that first sermon? It was Peter.

So why is Andrew there? I mean, James and John are always mentioned together. Peter rarely, if ever, is mentioned with his brother. Why? Let me go all the way back to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Remember what happened? Who found Jesus first? Andrew. Andrew is the very first person who had the discernment to say, "That's

the guy." Can we agree that Peter lacked in discernment? I mean, after all, he stuck his foot in his mouth on a regular basis. He's the only person that Jesus had to say, "Get behind me, Satan," to. He's consistently doing and saying things that aren't necessarily with discernment. So who is on the mountain? Andrew is, the same one who said, "Hey, Peter, we've found the Messiah. Come and discover him with us as well." You see, the invitation that Jesus gives to James and John and Peter and Andrew is very critical because what's the first thing he says? "Do not be deceived."

So you have this character known as Judas who throws up this softball of a question saying, "All right, Jesus, tell us about the last days. Jesus says, "Okay, I need Peter, James, John and Andrew. Come here. Come here, Andrew. I need you four to go up there with me and we need to have a little private powwow and we need to talk about this." And what does he say in verse 5? "Take heed lest any man deceive you." I want to walk through these verses and I want to see how is it that those that desire to deceive actually implement it, how is it that the Antichrist one day will pull this off, how is it that the devil pulled it off in the garden of Eden, and how is it that each and every day we are subjected to individuals who persuade us, mislead us, and deceive us into believing, thinking and/or doing things contrary to the word of God?

So let's begin with the first aspect of implementation. It always begins with a person. Notice what Jesus said, "There shall be many that are going to claim they're Christ, they're going to claim they're the Messiah. There are going to be those that rise up, their personalities are going to be so magnetic, their promises are going to be so good you're going to actually believe that they hold the answers they claim to hold."

You know, it's interesting that a few years ago, I was introduced to a word that has a very different definition than what you might believe. You know, most words when you look in the dictionary have several definitions, so if I were to use this word in a public context, grooming, you most likely think about your dog, right? A lot of money you spend to get them pretty, then they go roll in the mud as soon as you get them home. That's what happens when you groom your dog. But because of being a pastor, some years ago I was actually introduced to a much more sinister definition. You see, I have the opportunity and the privilege at times to walk with people as they're walking out of very difficult times. Maybe they'd been taken advantage of by somebody. Maybe they'd been harmed by somebody, maybe physical, maybe emotional, mental, spiritual, all aspects. They've been misled. They've been persuaded. They've been taken advantage of to the point where they've given somebody else complete and total control of their lives. Do you know what those sinister people call that? Grooming. They take a person and they very slowly, strategically and steadily get them to give them just a little bit more until they've got everything that they are.

Is that not what the devil did in the garden of Eden? He took humanity and said, "I want a little bit more." He did it very slowly, didn't he? In fact, you see the dialog, it didn't all come at once and when you think about this character in the Bible known as the Antichrist, this is an individual who one day will rule the entire world under his thumb, every belief system, every person, every background will owe allegiance to him. In fact,

the Bible says in Revelation 13 that he will give a mark that you can't buy, you can't sell, you can't live unless he gives you permission.

How does he pull it off? Just like all these other folks. Think about some of the great tyrants, some of the great dictators, and when I say great, I mean power, not whom they are. How did they do it? They did it incrementally, didn't they? Over time. You don't come out initially and say, "I'm here to take over." What do you do? "Hey, how about you give me this? How about you yield over that? How about you allow me to have access to that area of your life?" And you do it slowly, you do it strategically, so much so that you wake up one day and you can't function or breathe unless they give you permission to do so.

That's exactly what Jesus is saying. He says don't be deceived. There are going to be people who rise up over time and they're going to persuade you and mislead you and deceive you into thinking they're the ones who need control of your life when actually Jesus is going to come back and say, "I'm the one who needs that."

It's always implemented through persons, then it's implemented through power. Notice this very famous statement, verse 7, "You shall hear of wars, rumors of wars, don't be troubled. These things need be but the end shall not be. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." In other words, these individuals who slowly incrementally groom humanity, particularly whom we know as the Antichrist, one day will do so by taking over, taking control, creating an environment where those even through conflict come under their reign and their umbrella of power.

Power. You know, it's interesting that every tyrant, every dictator, every person who rises to the forefront claiming to have the answers for humanity always says they're going to do so for peace. Have you noticed that? It's that magic word that somehow they believe that's what humanity will gravitate to. If we just claim we're doing this to get peace, they'll jump onboard. If we do that for peace.

On the backside of World War I, millions of soldiers having given their life, what happens? The world comes together and they form what we call the League of Nations. Somehow, somehow if we can just sit around the campfire and sing Kumbayah we'll have peace. How did that last? Two decades later, the entire world found themselves in what we now call World War II. Almost every sovereign state on planet earth was in conflict. So on the backside of World War II they decided to change their name but not their purpose. Now we have the United Nations, the UN. They started in San Francisco, you may or may not know that, at the Fairmont Hotel. You ask me, that probably wasn't a good place to start but nonetheless that's where they started. They're at a hotel in San Francisco, they decided that once and for all we're going to have peace. They built a big old building in New York City. They invoked the Almighty, you may or may not know this, do you know the Bible is quoted on the UN building? It's from the book of Isaiah, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares." The mission is peace. Since the United Nations started, 273 wars have been fought.

What did Jesus say? Don't be deceived. There will be wars, rumors of wars, kingdom will rise, kingdom will go, but it's all to mislead, it's all to persuade. There's deception at its core. How can you claim to beat swords into plowshares and then oversee almost 300 wars at the same time? Oh, but then there's a certain posture Jesus warned us about. Notice what it says in the middle of verse 8, "there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines," and by the way, in the Luke 21 version it says there shall be pestilence or disease, "these are the beginning of sorrows." Not only is it implemented through these critical persons, not only do they demonstrate their power by taking over with the promise of peace, but they take a certain posture. What does Jesus say? There are going to be earthquakes in places you cannot explain. There are going to be disease that you can't figure out under a microscope. Yet these people will claim they can fix it. They'll claim that if you give them enough authority and enough power, they can change when and where earthquakes happen, tornadoes happen, tsunamis happen, and diseases happen. Do you know what their posture is? It's called the tower of Babel. Remember Genesis 11? What did humanity do? "We don't need you, God. We're going to be our own god."

Do you know how much narcissism it takes to be able to claim you can control a natural disaster? And yet untold numbers of people today say that if we'll just drive a different car, we can stop it. That's interesting. Did you know the New York Times ran an article in 1922 telling us that if we did not control some of these issues, that within just a few years the coastlines of America would be eradicated? I've got news for you: the thought that you can control natural disasters, the thought that you can prevent pestilence and all these things, you have a posture, you're claiming to be God.

What does the Antichrist do? He claims to be God. You see, Jesus is warning us, "Don't be deceived when you see these individuals. Don't be deceived when you hear this. Don't be deceived when you see this posture." And last but not least he says, "Don't be deceived," look at what it says in verse 9, "they will deliver you up to councils and to the synagogues and they will beat you." What happens next? When you don't fall for the personality, for the lies, for the persuasion, it's the natural occurrence, they punish you because you're not a part of their agenda.

Some of you have heard me say this for some time but I think it bears repeating today. It's sarcastic. It's my spiritual gift. Don't let the facts get in the way of your personal agenda. What happens? Here in verse 9 Jesus says, "If you stay true to what I've told you, they're going to persecute you, they're going to claim you're the enemy, they're going to tell you that you're not a part of the 'bigger picture.'" It's going to happen in the councils, by the way, that is secular and it's going to happen in the synagogues, that is what we might call sacred.

Why is this important? Because when you get to the book of Revelation 17 and 18 when that Antichrist figure finally reaches the climax of his reign, not only does he have a very political stream, he has a very religious one as well. What do you see happening here when he says you will be delivered to the synagogues? Those who claim to be of the faith will also turn their backs on you as well. Why? Because they bought the agenda, they

bought the system, they bought the lie, they bought the persuasion, whatever it may be. And what did Jesus say? Do not be deceived. He told us this 2,000 years ago. This stuff is going to happen. These people will keep showing up. These messages will not change and the persecution will not stop.

So let's close today by doing a little investigation. Now an investigation is where you're presented with a concern and issue that needs to be solved or resolved, and anybody who is in law enforcement or forensic science will tell you that if you're going to do an investigation properly, it needs to be objective. Just let the facts speak. Just allow the information to be there without persuasion, without misleading, without deception. Just let it speak.

I love what verse 10 says, "And the gospel." Now that little phrase might not seem as significant as it is but work with me for just a moment. Those of you who I haven't had the privilege of meeting yet, you may not know but others do, my favorite word in the Bible is "but." I love it. Do you know why? Because all of a sudden something is being communicated, when the word "but" shows up it changes everything. Let me give you my favorite example, "For the wages of sin is death." Can you imagine if there was a period at the end of that statement? We'd all be in trouble. "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Do you see how that switches everything? Do you notice what's in verse 10 or what's not in verse 10? There's no "but," there's an "and, and the gospel." Do you know why that is significant? If there was a "but" there, it would mean that somehow, someday there would be this great battle between philosophies, there would be this great warfare between ideologies, but because it says "and the gospel," here's what the scripture is saying: as they rise to power, there is still the gospel. As they fight the wars, there is still the gospel. As they persecute you, there is still the gospel. What Jesus is saying is this, no matter who it is, what they do or what they do to you, the gospel of Jesus Christ still permeates and rises above whatever deceit they're preaching that day. It's not "but the gospel," it's "and the gospel."

You know, the very first word or the first verse of the book of Mark says the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here we are three years later chronologically, here we are on the Mount of Olives and the same good news that was spoken in the first verse is still good news in the midst of pestilence, it's still good news in the midst of warfare, it's still good news in the midst of deception. It's not "but the gospel," it's "and the gospel." In other words, in the midst of deception, in the midst of all these things, Jesus is very strategically saying that whom he is and the good news that he brings to our lives cannot be altered by any of it. And the gospel.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe this morning whether in person or online, maybe you're that individual who may be very unintentionally and with all the right motives has gotten caught up in the deceptions of the world, you've been chasing every rabbit trail for good news here and there with this person, that group, whatever it may be, and maybe today the Lord spoke real clearly that it's the gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ that's the part that's missing. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe you're that person this morning, can I encourage you to do so?

It's not about reading a certain script. It's not about passing a certain test. It's simply about calling out, confessing one's sin condition and asking Jesus to be the solution.

If you're that person this morning, can I encourage you to just have that conversation, not necessarily out loud, not necessarily the same words that I would say, but maybe in the same tone. "God, today I confess I've gone wayward. I've fallen for the lies. I've listened to all the rhetoric but today I understand, I understand today, God, at the end of the day and at the end of life and for all of eternity I've got a sin problem that only Jesus Christ can fix. So God, today I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to come on my behalf. God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. And God, I believe that as we sang about that mercy tree today, that when he hung on that tree, he not only was in physical pain but he bore the punishment of my sin. And God, I believe three days later when he rose from the grave, he made it possible for my sin to be forgiven, he made it feasible for my soul to be saved for all of eternity. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the issues, problems and struggles in this world but there is one thing that I know and believe and that is Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. The best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today if you're on our campus, in a moment after I pray, can I encourage you just to step out and step forward while we stand and sing? But maybe today you've been a believer for years, maybe even decades, and it's not about stepping out and stepping forward, it's about stepping out of here in a moment and making sure that your discernment is tuned to the word of God and the Holy Spirit and not just the loudest most frequent voice that comes across the airwaves.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, Lord, there are those that need to make a decision for eternity and there are many of us that need to make a decision about the next hour. Help us, O God, today to listen to no other voice but yours. It is the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.