

“Intro to the Olivet Discourse”  
Mark 13:1-8  
(Preached at Trinity, June 11, 2014)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 13** contains some of the most difficult material of the entire Book of Mark. In fact, it is some of the most difficult in all of the N.T. This material is also found in **Matthew 24 & Luke 21**
2. After a period of intense teaching in the Temple Jesus turns to leave, possibly never again to return. Jesus had condemned the religious leaders for their hypocrisy. In reality they were only reflecting the hypocrisy of the nation of Israel. Israel as a favored nation had reached the end long before.  
In **Matthew’s** Gospel this passage follows immediately upon Jesus pronouncement of judgment upon Israel.  
**Matthew 23:37-38 NAU** - "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. <sup>38</sup> "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"  
Jesus divulges to them that the entire system of Judaism was about to come crashing down. He says this very generation was about to experience the judgment of God upon the house of Israel.  
**Matthew 23:36 NAU** – “Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.”
3. This must have been confusing to the disciples. The Temple stood as the bedrock of the Old Covenant system. As they departed they called attention to the beauty and greatness of the Temple structure.  
**Mark 13:1 NAU** - "As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!"
  - a. This is referring to Herod’s Temple. It was a beautiful building – one of the wonders of the world. No expense had been spared in its building. Construction was started in 20 BC Herod employed 10,000 skilled workmen to labor on the structure. According to the Gospel of John (2:20) construction lasted 46 years. It wasn’t finally completed until 64 AD, six years before it was destroyed by the Romans.  
It was built of white marble that was ornamented with gold. It was stunning to behold. Josephus described it as a snow covered mountain dazzling on every side.
  - b. In reality it was only a whitewashed tomb, beautiful on the outside but full of decay inwardly.  
There are many beautiful religious buildings on this earth. Without Christ they are only the idols of foolish men.
  - c. The Temple structure was going to be utterly destroyed. Every stone would be moved from its place.  
In the 70 AD destruction the Temple was inadvertently set on fire, but then the stones were taken apart as the soldiers tried to recover the melted gold. The prophecy of Jesus was carried out in detail.

4. This chapter is known as *The Olivet Discourse*, named because Jesus gave these instructions to His disciples on the Mount of Olives the night before His betrayal and arrest.
- A. The Mount of Olives rises up 2723 feet above the Mediterranean Sea. During the days of Jesus it would have been rich in olive groves, fig orchards and palm groves and lush foliage. Much was destroyed when Titus laid siege upon Jerusalem.
  - B. During this final week Jesus would retire in the evening to the Mount of Olives to escape the crowds in the city below.  
**Luke 21:37 NAU** - " Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet."
  - C. The Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed His prayer of agony and where He was betrayed and arrested was on the lower slopes of Olivet.
  - D. The view of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives would have been stunning. It was from this vantage point that Jesus revealed to His disciples the Temple destruction that would soon take place.
5. The Disciples were actually asking two questions:
- A. "Tell us, when will these things be?" Referring to the destruction of the Temple.
  - B. The other question is recorded in Matthew  
**Matthew 24:3 NAU** - "what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"  
**Mark 13:4 NAU** - "Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"
  - C. In the minds of the disciples they were actually only asking a single question.
    1. They could not imagine the world continuing without the Temple. The destruction of the Temple must surely be the end of the age. The rabbis often taught that the Temple was one of the seven things for which the world was made.
    2. The Jewish understanding of the Messiah was one of a powerful conquering king who would destroy Israel's enemies and permanently establish the kingdom. The disciples were also still holding to this understanding.
    3. If the Temple was destroyed it must surely mean the end of the age. So their question was really one single question.  
In Jesus' answer, however, He addresses both the destruction of Jerusalem *and* His second coming as two distinctly different events.
6. This is an extremely difficult passage to interpret thus leading to the many differing views. How you interpret it will reflect your millennial view – pre, post, a. There are generally four different approaches to interpreting the Olivet Discourse.
- A. There is the *futurist interpretation* – it is all future.  
The futurist sees this passage with a focus upon the Jews during the Great Tribulation before Christ returns. The abomination of desolation will be when the antichrist desecrates the Temple. Dispensationalists believe that the fig tree in **Verse 28** points to the birth of the nation Israel in 1948 and that the generation that witnesses this will not pass away until all these things come to pass.

1. This view ignores the plain teaching of the passage as it relates to God's judgment upon the Jewish nation.  
**Mark 13:14-18 NAU** - "But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup> "The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; <sup>16</sup> and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. <sup>17</sup> "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>18</sup> "But pray that it may not happen in the winter."
  2. We can also see this more clearly in the parallel passage in Luke  
**Luke 21:20 NAS** - "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand."  
**Verses 23-24** - "for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, <sup>24</sup> and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."
- B. The *full preterist interpretation* – sees the Olivet Discourse as being confined to the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
1. After all, this *was* the question of the disciples:  
**Mark 13:4 NAU** - "'Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be the sign* when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"
  2. In the preterist interpretation there is no future tribulation of the church in this passage. They see the coming of Christ as referring to the establishment of His Kingdom. To some degree this view is reasonable.
    - a. They teach that **Verses 24-26** point to the change of kingdoms or governments. Such language is the language of the OT.  
**Daniel 2:35 NAU** - "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."
    - b. **Verse 26** refers to the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. In other words, the Temple and all it represented was out and Christ and the New Covenant was in.
    - c. They then see **Verse 27** as referring to the great Gospel campaign as God is sending forth His messengers to gather in the elect. This is consistent with **Verse 10**  
**Mark 13:10 NAU** - "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations."
  3. This view ignores the clear teaching of the return of Christ in glory and the exhortation to be alert.  
**Mark 13:32-33 NAU** - "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*. <sup>33</sup> "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come."

- C. The *double-fulfillment view* – This is the view of William Hendriksen. There are elements of the Olivet Discourse that point to *both* the destruction of Jerusalem *and* the second coming of Christ. We don't have to reject this view completely. The tribulation spoken of in Chapter 13 must not be limited to 70 AD. but we can see it as a type of the tribulation of the Church in the Gospel age.
- D. There is another view that was put forth by the late John Murray, professor of systematic theology at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia that seems to be the most balanced.  
He divided the discourse in a clear logical order that maintained consistency with the context of the passage.
1. In His answer to the disciples Jesus is dealing with two questions – the destruction of Jerusalem and the period leading to the Second Advent of Christ. In other words He is speaking of what is called the interadvental period – the period between the first and second advents of Christ.
  2. Murray does an excellent job in pointing out to us the relationship of the Olivet Discourse to the Gospel age.
7. To the first part of their question, “when shall these things be” Jesus gives instruction about the immediate – the conditions leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. But regarding the second advent He gives no direct answer for it is not for us to know the times. Jesus merely describes events that will characterized the entire period.  
**Acts 1:7** – “And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”  
**Matthew 24:36 NAU** - "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."  
**Mark 13:32-33 NAU** - "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*.<sup>33</sup> "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come."
8. In the Olivet Discourse Jesus answers both of the question of His disciples—things near at hand—the the destruction of Jerusalem, and things as they will continue to be. Jesus is answering the question of His disciples by disclosing to them a synopsis of history from the time of His death until He returns in glory.
9. What we'll see is the very so-called signs that so many today hold forth as evidence for the nearness of the return of Christ are not signs at all.  
Jesus begins with a warning in **Verse 5** - "See to it that no one misleads you."  
A. In **Verses 6-13** Jesus describes the things that would continue during the entire inter-advental period – the period stretching between His departure and His return at the end of the age – **Verse 7** - " but *that is not yet the end.*"  
B. Then **Verses 14-23** Jesus speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem  
C. **Verses 24-27** Jesus turns our attention to the second coming.  
D. **Verses 28-31** again speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem  
E. Then finally, **Verses 32-37** redirects our attention to the second coming of Christ.
10. The chief point for us:  
**Mark 13:32-33 NAU** - "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*.<sup>33</sup> "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come."