

“The Great Tribulation”  
Mark 13:9-20  
(Preached at Trinity, July 16, 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. After a period of intense teaching in the Temple Jesus turns to leave. As He was departing His disciples came to Him boasting about the beauty and greatness of the Temple structure. Jesus divulges to them that the entire system of Judaism was about to come crashing down. The Temple structure was going to be utterly destroyed. Every stone would be moved from its place.
2. Of course, this occurred in 70 A.D. but the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was not the end of the age and the second coming of Christ.  
The Disciples are 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?"  
Referring to the second coming of Christ. The disciples automatically linked the second coming of our Lord to the end of the world.
  - C. As I pointed out previously, although the disciples were asking two questions, in their mind they were thinking of a single question for they could not imagine the world continuing without the Temple. The rabbis often taught that the Temple was one of the seven things for which the world was made.  
In Jesus' answer, however, He addresses both the destruction of Jerusalem *and* His second coming – two distinct and separate events.
3. One problem some have in interpreting this chapter today is they still try to limit it to a single question.
  - A. The *preterist* sees the Olivet Discourse as speaking only of 70 AD; that it finds its fulfillment at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Jesus came in judgment upon a sinful people and brought the devastating end to the Judaism of the Old Covenant. **Matthew 23:38 NAU** - "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" .
  - B. The *futurist* including most Dispensationalists today insist that the Olivet Discourse finds its total fulfillment in the future; that it is speaking of the Jews facing the Great Tribulation just before the second coming of Christ.
4. In order to properly interpret the passage we must realize Jesus is speaking two entirely different events: the destruction of Jerusalem *and* the second advent of Christ. But we must also see that He is also referring to the entire period between the advents of Christ, what is referred to as the inter-advental period. We also call it the Gospel age.

5. Tonight we'll address an issue that Jesus disclosed regarding the coming judgment upon the Jews. It was foreseen by Daniel  
**Mark 13:14 NAU** - "But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand)"  
**Daniel 11:31 NAU** - "Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation."
6. Jesus is declaring the continuing existence of those things disclosed to Daniel. As we saw last time, Jesus is disclosing those things which are near at hand – the destruction of Jerusalem and also describes 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.
7. As I explained last time, Jesus is saying there are no particular signs prior to His return. He describes conditions that would characterize the entire Gospel age. However, there is progression and increasing intensity as with the pains of a woman in labor.
8. How are we to understand this Abomination of Desolation?
- I. First, as it is applied here it should be applied to 70 AD
- A. In **Verses 14-20** we find the great affliction that came upon Jerusalem just prior to the fall
1. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus is calling this the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.  
**Matthew 24:15-16 NAU** - "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), <sup>16</sup> then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains."
  2. Luke applies it specifically to Jerusalem  
**Luke 21:20 NAS** - "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand."
  3. D.A. Carson notes that the description of this tribulation is too limited "geographically and culturally" to extend beyond the events of 70 AD.
  4. Jesus admonishes them to flee from the city about to come under siege  
**V.14** – flee to the mountains  
Many commentators comment that while many Jews rushed *into* Jerusalem to defend it resulting in a horrible blood bath, Christians indeed fled and found refuge.
  5. **V.15-16** – Don't stop to gather your possessions (we don't spend much time on our housetop today)
  6. **V.17** – speaks of the peril of those hindered from fleeing by the necessary care of children
  7. **V.18**
    - a. Points to the uncertainty of the timing – The season is not certain but pray that it isn't during the winter  
Matthew's Gospel adds that the day is not certain but pray that it isn't the Sabbath  
**Matthew 24:20 NAU** - "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath."

- b. This also points to this tribulation being specifically addressed to the Jews – the Sabbath would have little significance for our culture or even most in the modern church
- B. Jesus said that the sign of this tribulation would be the Abomination of Desolation  
**Mark 13:14 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."  
**Matthew 24:15 NAU** - "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place "
1. When Daniel received his visions he struggled to understand them. Gabriel was sent to interpret.  
**Daniel 8:15-16 NAU** - "When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man. <sup>16</sup> And I heard the voice of a man between *the banks of Ulai*, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give this *man* an understanding of the vision."  
**Daniel 9:22 NAU** - "He gave *me* instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding."
  2. Now Jesus is claiming to be the another interpreter of Daniel's vision.  
**Daniel 11:31 NAU** - "Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation."  
**Daniel 12:11 NAU** - "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there will be* 1,290 days."
  3. This was first fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. when he erected a pagan altar over the altar of burnt offering and swine were offered upon it.  
 He banned Judaism and put an end to the sacrifices. Thousands of Jews were killed through his treachery
  4. But this was only a foreshadow of the desolation to come.
    - a. Jesus says, "**But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION** " signifying that Daniel's prophecy was about to have a second fulfillment when the armies of the Roman emperor entered into Jerusalem. Jesus warned them flee!  
 And when the Christians saw the Romans staging to put down the Jewish revolt in 66-67 AD they did flee Jerusalem.  
**Luke 21:20 NAS** - "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand."
    - b. This was the darkest hour Jerusalem had ever experienced. It was far worse than when Babylon destroyed it in 587 BC or when Antiochus Epiphanes desolated it in 163 BC  
**Mark 13:19 NAU** - "For those days will be a *time of* tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will."

- c. It is said that when Titus overtook Jerusalem more than a million Jews, who had crowded into the city, perished. The carnage was terrible. The historian Josephus wrote, "While the sanctuary was burning . . . neither pity for the aged nor respect for rank was shown; on the contrary, children and old people, laity and priests alike were massacred."
  - d. Yet, even in this terrible judgment God showed mercy  
**Mark 13:20 NAU** - "Unless the Lord had shortened *those* days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days."
5. God's temporal judgments are all tempered with mercy. None of the terrible judgments upon the earth have been the full cup of God's wrath. They are only foreshadows of the judgment to come which will be the terrible manifestation of God's condemnation of sin.
  6. Terrible as it was, the tribulation of Jerusalem was not as terrible as they deserved.
- C. But will it still have a third fulfillment before Christ returns
1. The Church has always been characterized by persecution. The church of Christ is a suffering church.
  2. This is one of the major themes of the Book of Revelation
  3. There are no signs to look for in the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus spoke of things that will continue and increase in intensity but nothing that would point to a specific time.  
**Mark 13:7-8 NAU** - "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but *that is* not yet the end. "For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will *also* be famines. These things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs."
  4. There are two things that will continue throughout the church age.
    - a. Persecution will continue.  
**Mark 13:9 NAU** - "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to *the* courts, and you will be flogged in *the* synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them."
    - b. The Gospel will continue to be preached.  
**Mark 13:10 NAU** - "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations."

## Conclusion

1. God's purposes are perfect. History is unfolding according to His great redemptive purpose. Like birth pains it is unfolding with ever increasing intensity.
2. While the church has always been a suffering church, Satan will be loosed at the end of the age and unleash his terrible fury upon God's people. A particularly wicked leader will rise up whom Paul refers to as the "man of lawlessness."  
**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NAU** - "Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God."
3. Our duty is to be faithful in every generation, even in the face of great tribulation. Next time we'll continue to look at the Great Tribulation as it applies to the Gospel age.