

Pentwater Bible Church

Gospel of Mark

Message 51

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The Great Day of His Wrath by John Martin Cir 1851-1853

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Dentwater Bible Church

The Book of Mark

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The Olivet Discourse

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The Olivet Discourse is Christ's last great sermon and it touches on many key events during The Church Age and the ushering in of the Kingdom. It is important that we understand this discourse in order to fully be aware of the end times and experience the pressure that Christ wanted us to sense so that we would continue working (laboring) for The Kingdom.

The more literally we take the Bible our theology becomes more fundamental. The less literally we take the Bible the more liberal our theology becomes.

BROAD OUTLINE OF THE DISCOURSE
According to Fruchtenbaum.

We will be studying The Olivet Discourse in 14 sections. The basic format is chronological. However Jesus will break the chronology periodically and when He does He will tell us.

1. The Historical Setting
2. The Three Questions
3. The General Characteristics of The Church Age
4. The Sign of The End of The Age
5. Personal Experiences of the Apostles
6. The Sign of the fall of Jerusalem
7. The Great Tribulation
8. The Sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah
9. The Regathering of Israel
10. The Exhortation
11. The Parable of the Fig Tree
12. The Rapture of the Church
13. Parables urging Watchfulness, Readiness and Laboring
14. The Judgment of the Gentiles

3. THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH AGE

Before answering the third first. He began by answering the question in a negative manner and in doing so He was providing some general characteristics of the Church Age, which are not signs.

Matthew 24:4-6 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you .For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet (KJV).

Rather than immediately answering all three questions, Jesus decided to give some facts about the Church Age, which are part of “This Age”, none of which meant that the end had begun. Jesus answered their questions at first in a way that they would not jump to certain conclusions because of various events. Therefore, He first answered the questions negatively so as to tell them what events would *not mean* the end of the age. There were to be two general characteristics of the Church Age.

1. THE RISE OF FALSE MESSIAHS

Historically, Jesus was the first person who claimed to be The Messiah. After Him many would come making that claim. After Jesus many Jewish men made that claim from Simon-Bar Cochba to Sabbetal Tzvi and Jacob Frank. They led many astray with their false claims. A number of Gentiles have done this too. Just as Christ said this was to be a general characteristic of the church Age. This was in no way meant to identify the beginning of the “End of The Age.”

2. THE EXISTENCE OF LOCAL WARS

The second general characteristic would be the existence of local wars. Jesus stated that when you “Hear of wars and rumors of wars,” these things also would not signal the start of end of the age. Even if such a war took place in the Middle East it would not be prophetically significant.

3. CONCLUSION

Concerning both false messiahs and local wars, in Matthew verse 24: 6, Jesus said: *for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet.* Luke emphasized this point when he wrote: *for all these things must needs to come to pass first; but the end is not immediately (Luke 21:9).* In other words, the rise of false Messiahs and long periods of local wars will necessarily come first. But neither of these things would in any way shape or form be signs that the end had begun.

4. THE SIGN OF THE END OF THE AGE

Having provided for His disciples certain characteristics that would in no way indicate that the end had begun, Jesus next proceeded to answer the third question, which concerned the sign that the end of the age had truly begun. It is recorded in Matthew 24:7-8, Mark 13:8, and Luke 21:10-11.

Mark 13:8

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 (KJV).

The Matthew Account Reads:

Matthew 24:7-8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these [are] the beginning of sorrows.

According to all three Gospel writers, the sign of the end of the age is said to be when nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. This act will be coupled with famines and earth quakes in various places and then Yeshua clearly stated that this would be the beginning of travail (sorrows). The term travail means “birth pang”. It refers to the series of birth pangs that a woman undergoes before giving birth to a baby. The prophets pictures the last days as a series of birth pangs before the birth of the Messianic Age. The beginning of travail, the first birth pang and the sign that the end of the age has begun is when nation rises against, nation and kingdom against kingdom. It is important to find out just exactly where this idiom is used in the Bible. It is used in at least two passages.

First it is found in:

Isaiah 19:1-4 The burden of Egypt. Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, [and] kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts (ASV, 1901).

Here the land of Egypt is in view and the idiom points to a conflict all over the land of Egypt as the nation is engrossed in a civil war.

Second it is found in:

II Chronicles 15:1-7: And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: But when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded (ASV 1901).

In this passage it is the Middle East that is in view, and the idiom points to conflict all over the Middle East. In the Olivet Discourse it is the whole world that is in view. This is clear from Matthew 24:14, 21, 30 and 31. Therefore the idiom refers to a worldwide conflict and this world wide conflict is the first birth pang. This worldwide conflict is the sign that the end of the age or the last days had begun.

Jesus had already clearly stated that local wars between a few nations would not indicate that the end had begun. But when He said that when there is "nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," this will mean the end of the age has begun.

To gain a fuller understanding of what the idiom "nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" means, it is necessary to turn to the Jewish usage of these statements. Clearly the Bible passages we just read show the usage and context of that usage. This expression then used in the Olivet Discourse is a Hebrew idiom for a world war.

This closely parallels the Jewish writings of this same period. One Jewish source known as the "Zohar Chadash" states:

"At that time wars shall be stirred up in the world. Nation shall be against nation and city against city; much distress shall be renewed against the enemies of the Israelites."

Another Jewish midrash (commentary) known as the Bereshit Rabbah states:

"If you shall see the kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah (XLII:4)

The Rabbis clearly taught that a worldwide conflict would signal the coming of the Messiah. Yeshua corrected this idea slightly, for He said that when the world war occurs, while it does not signal the coming of the Messiah, it will signal that the end of the age has begun. These birth pangs that Yeshua talked about are the same as the footsteps the rabbis talked about. The "footsteps of the Messiah had to do with a series of events that lead up to the coming of the Messiah

World war I, 1914-1918, was the fulfillment of this particular prophecy, for that was the first time the entire world was at war. As virtually all historians agree, World War II was merely a continuation of World War I. Furthermore; both world wars had a decisive impact on Jewish history. World War I gave impetus to the growth of the Zionist movement, as well as eliminating the last Islamic Caliphate the Ottoman Empire. World War II led to the re-establishment of the Jewish State. Since WW I, history has entered the last days of the Church Age. However, the last days are an extended period of time.

The sign that the end of the age has begun is the worldwide conflict fulfilled by World War I and World War II.

However, Jesus does describe these calamities as the *beginning of sorrows*, which is literally the beginning of labor pains; the idea is both of giving birth to a new age, and implying an increase of intensity and frequency in these calamities. The new age will be the Kingdom of Christ on earth He spoke of in the Lord's Prayer.

The worldwide conflict was to be coupled with famines and earth quakes. As far as famines are concerned, here are a few of the large ones since the time of the First World War. See the Appendix for a more complete list.

Chinese Famine of 1928-1930-Over 3 million perish in northwest China
Chinese Famine of 1936-5 million Chinese die in what is called the "New Famine"

Chinese Drought 1941-1942-Over 3 million perish from starvation.

Man-made Famine: 44,000,000 mostly from wars and poor government management.¹

Additionally, the frequency of earthquakes has increased significantly since around the time of the 1st World War.

The earthquake factor is even more interesting. According to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, between the years 63–1896 there were only 26 recorded earthquakes. Most of the world’s earthquakes began to occur since 1900. In conjunction with World War I, there were several significant earthquakes: 1905 India—19,000 killed; 1906 Chile—20,000 killed; 1908 Italy—70,000–100,000 killed; 1915 Italy—30,000 killed; 1917 Indonesia—15,000 killed; 1918 China—10,000 killed; 1920 China—200,000 killed; 1923 Japan—143,000 killed.

Subsequent and devastating earthquakes include: 1927 China—200,000 killed; 1932 China—70,000 killed; 1933 China—10,000 killed; 1934 India—10,700 killed; 1935 Pakistan—30,000–60,000 killed; 1939 Chile—28,000 killed, Turkey—30,000 killed; 1948 Russia—110,000 killed; 1960 Morocco—10,000–15,000 killed; 1962 Iran—12,000 killed; 1968 Iran—12,000–20,000 killed; 1970 China—10,000 killed, Peru—66,000 killed; 1974 China—20,000 killed; 1975 China—10,000 killed; 1976 Guatemala—23,000 killed, China—255,000 killed, Philippines—8,000 killed; 1978 Iran—15,000 killed; 1988 Russia-Turkish Border—25,000 killed; 1990 Iran—40,000–50,000 killed; 1999 Turkey—15,600 killed.

There has been a tremendous increase in earthquake activity in conjunction with World War I. The ones listed here are only the major ones with death rate of 10,000 or more. Added to this are a greater number with smaller death rates. These appear to grow in frequency and intensity until the Great Tribulation. The book of Revelation, describing the last set of earthquakes mentions at least five of them (Revelation 6:12-17; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:16-21). The final earthquake, mentioned in the seventh bowl of wrath, is described as “a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath” (Revelation 16: 18-19). One article from The United States Geological Survey, National Earthquake Information Center, Earthquakes with 1,000 or More Deaths from 1900.²

In the first 1000 years after Jesus, there were approximately 5 recorded major earthquakes (although we are sure more occurred in remote locations). However, the trend has been on the increase:

14th century, there were 157 major earthquakes.

15th century, there were 174 major earthquakes.

16th century, there were 253 major earthquakes.

17th century, there were 278 major earthquakes.

¹ Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; posted December 13, 1999.

² URL: <http://neic.usgs.gov/neis/eqlists/eqsmajr.html>. May 2000.

² URL: <http://neic.usgs.gov/neis/eqlists/eqsmajr.html>. May 2000.

*18th century, there were 640 major earthquakes.
19th century, there were 2119 major earthquakes.
Nearly 900,000 earthquakes have been recorded thus far in the 20th century.
An earthquake every hour!*

These statistics however should be tempered with the fact that man's ability to detect earthquakes worldwide has equally increased; nevertheless, the statistics are significant.³

The first sign or the first birth pang signifying that the last days of the age have begun was to be a worldwide conflict coupled with famines and earthquakes. This was fulfilled in 1914–1918. This also marks the first of the events leading up to the Tribulation period.

5. THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE APOSTLES

Jesus just provided an answer to the third question regarding the sign of the end of the age. Then He turned back to His own time to detain some of the experiences that the Apostles would have to undergo. The Luke account says:

Luke 21:12-19 But before all these things, they shall lay their hands on you, and shall persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake. It shall turn out unto you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay. But ye shall be delivered up even by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and [some] of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. And not a hair of your head shall perish. In your patience ye shall win your souls (KJV).

The Luke account clearly states that what is about to be described is going to occur *before* the sign that the end of the age has begun, as the passage begins with the phrase, *But before all these things*. Jesus then described some personal experiences that the apostles were to go through after He departed from them. Altogether, He listed nine things. First, in verse 12a, the Jews will reject them. Secondly, in verse 12b, the Gentiles will reject them. Thirdly, in verse 13, they will undergo persecutions, but these persecutions will provide opportunities for testimony. Fourthly, they will succeed in proclaiming the gospel everywhere (Mark 13:10); this is verified by Romans 10:8 and Colossians 1:6, 23. Fifth, in verses 12-15, they need not worry about preparing defenses before their trials, because they will be given divine utterance when they are brought before judgment. Sixth, in verse 16, their own family members will reject them. Seventh, in verse 17 it says all men will hate them. Some will be martyred. Eighth, in verse 18, nevertheless, their salvation is assured. And ninth, in verse 19, they will succeed in winning many souls.

That the apostles did, indeed, experience all these things is well-known both from the Book of Acts and from other historical records that trace the activities of the apostles beyond that which is recorded in the Book of Acts. While the Messiah had already

³ Fruchtenbaum, A. G. (2003). *The footsteps of the Messiah: a study of the sequence of prophetic events* (Rev. ed.). Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries pg. 96-97

answered their third question concerning the sign of the end of the age, before proceeding to answer their other two questions, He chose to predict some of the personal experiences that they would have to undergo before the sign of the end of the age would come. They were not to expect the end of the age to come too soon. In fact, Jesus predicted that many of them would die before the end of the age ever began.

6. THE SIGN OF THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

Only after having spelled out clearly that the apostles would have to undergo a period of suffering as well as have a successful ministry did Jesus go on to answer their first question concerning the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The answer is recorded only in Luke 21:20-24

Luke 21:20-24 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (KJV).

In answer to the first question, the Messiah gave them the sign that would mark the fact that Jerusalem was about to be destroyed. The sign was the surrounding of the City of Jerusalem by armies. The Jewish believers were told that, when they saw this sign, they were to leave Jerusalem and Judea and flee outside the Land.

This discourse was written to Jewish believers. The church had not yet been established and the Gentiles were not included at this time.

Matthew 10:5-6 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into [any] city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (KJV).

Matthew 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (KJV).

These verses show that at this particular time in human history Christ was working exclusively with the Jews. Later the Gentiles would be brought in to the Church. After the gentiles came into the Church the order of presenting the gospel would not change though.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (KJV).

Some day the Jews will all be saved.

Romans 11:25-28 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (cf. Luke 19:42) And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this [is] my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (cf. Leviticus 26) As concerning the gospel, [they are] enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, [they are] beloved for the fathers' sakes (KJV).

This sign would mark the coming desolation of Jerusalem and, from that point on, Jerusalem will be continually trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. *The sign was the surrounding of the City of Jerusalem by armies.* The Jewish believers were told that, when they saw this sign, they were to leave Jerusalem and Judea and flee outside the Land.

This prophecy was fulfilled in an interesting way. In the year A.D. 66, the first Jewish revolt broke out against the Romans. When the revolt first began, the Roman general in the Land, Cestus Gallus, came with his armies from Caesarea and surrounded Jerusalem. The surrounding of the city marked the sign that Jesus had promised, and the Jewish believers knew that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed. Jesus had commanded the Jewish believers to desert the city when they saw this happening. However, it was impossible to do so while the Romans were surrounding the city.

Then Cestus Gallus noticed that his supply lines were not secure. He did not have enough supplies to maintain an extended siege, so he lifted the siege of Jerusalem in order to back to Caesarea. On the way, he was attacked by Jewish forces and killed. Temporarily, the armies no longer surrounded the city, so every single Jewish believer was about to leave Jerusalem. They crossed the Jordan River and set up a new community of Jewish believers in the town of Pella in the Transjordan. Jewish believers from Judea, Galilee and the Golan joined them. There they waited for the prophecy to be fulfilled.⁴

In the year A.D. 68, a new Roman general named Vespasian and his son, Titus, again besieged the city, and in the year A.D. 70, the city and the Temple were destroyed. Altogether, 1,200,000 Jews were killed in the final onslaught, but not one Jewish believer died because they obeyed the words of their Messiah. Since that time, Jerusalem has indeed been trodden down by the Gentiles and continues to be so to the present day. Jerusalem will not be free of Gentile nations treading upon her until the Messiah returns.

With these words, the Jesus answered their first question, the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. That left one more question of the three to be answered. This is the sign of the second coming.

NEXT WEEK: MARK: JESUS TEACHES THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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⁴ Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). *The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged*. Peabody: Hendrickson.

1921	Russian famine of 1921	Russia	5 million[74]
1921-1922	1921-1922 famine in Tatarstan	Russia	
1924-1925	Famine in Volga German colonies in Russia. One-third of the entire population perished[75]	Russia	
1928-1929	Famine in Ruanda-Burundi, causing large migrations to the Congo	Rwanda and Burundi (present day)	
1928-1930	Famine in northern China. The drought resulted in 3 million deaths	China	3 million
1932-1933	Soviet famine of 1932-1933 and Soviet-related famine in Ukraine	Soviet Union and Ukraine	7-10 million in Ukraine, millions in Russia[76]
1936		China	5 million[77]
1940-1945	Famine in Warsaw Ghetto, as well as other ghettos and concentration camps	Occupied Poland	
1941-44	Leningrad famine caused by a 900-day blockade by German troops.	Russia	1 million
1941-1944	Famine in Greece caused by the Axis occupation.[79][80]	Greece	300,000
1942-43	Chinese famine of 1942-43	Henan, China	2-3 million
1943	Bengal famine of 1943	Bengal, India	1.5-7 million
1943	Famine in Ruanda-Urundi, causing migrations to the Congo	Rwanda and Burundi (present day)	
1944-45	Java during World War II	Indonesia	2.4 million[81]
1944	Dutch famine of 1944 during World War II	Netherlands	20,000
1944	Rwanda famine of 1944	Rwanda	
1945	Vietnamese Famine of 1945	Vietnam	400,000-2 million
1947	Soviet Famine of 1947	Soviet Union	1-1.5 million[82][83]
1958	Famine in Tigray	Ethiopia	100,000
1959-1961	The Great Chinese Famine	China	15-43 million[84]
1966-1967	Lombok, drought and malnutrition, exacerbated by restrictions on regional rice trade	Indonesia	50,000[85]
1967-1970	Biafran famine caused by Nigerian blockade	Nigeria	
1968-1972	Sahel drought created a famine that killed a million people[86]	Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso	
1972-1973	Famine in Ethiopia caused by drought and poor governance;	Ethiopia	60,000[87]
1974	Bangladesh famine of 1974	Bangladesh	1 million
1975-1979	Khmer Rouge. An estimated 2 million	Cambodia	
1980-1981	Caused by drought and conflict[87]	Uganda	30,000[87]
1984-1985	1984-1985 famine in Ethiopia	Ethiopia	
1991-1992	Famine in Somalia caused by drought and civil war[87]	Somalia	300,000[87]
1996	North Korean famine.[88][89] Scholars estimate 600,000 died of starvation	North Korea	200,000 to 3.5 million
1998	1998 Sudan famine caused by war and drought	Sudan	70,000[87]
1998-2000	Famine in Ethiopia. The situation worsened by Eritrean-Ethiopian War	Ethiopia	
1998-2004	Second Congo War. 3.8 million people died, mostly from starvation and disease	Democratic Republic of the Congo	
2011-2012	Famine in Somalia, brought on by the 2011 East Africa drought[91]	Somalia	
2012	Famine in West Africa, brought on by the 2012 Sahel drought[92]	Senegal, Gambia, Niger, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso	