

Christian, Expect Tribulation until Jesus Comes

Mark 13:1-13

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Introduction:

Today in our sermon series from Mark, we have come to Mark 13.

- Recently in Mark, we have seen Jesus' final ministry at Jerusalem.
- He has been more open about presenting Himself as the Messiah—
 - from the manner of His entry on a colt to His cleansing of the temple, He has been behaving as the promised one who has come to save.
- We have seen how the Sanhedrin, the highest court of the Jewish church, has taken notice of this to their great consternation.
 - They have confronted Him with questions aimed at intimidating Him, entrapping Him, or at least at stumping Him, but their efforts have utterly failed.
 - Instead of making Jesus look foolish, they have only provided an occasion for His surpassing wisdom to shine all the more and the outcome has been that He has exposed their hypocrisy, duplicity, and spiritual blindness...
 - leading up to a warning to His hearers about the scribes who love to go about in their long robes and devour widows' houses, and telling of how they will be condemned. Their house will be left desolate.

With all this, the stage is set for chapter 13 where Jesus instructs His disciples (as He has so often done in the past) in order to prepare them for their future service to Him.

- As we have seen in His former instructions to them,
 - Even though they did not understand much of what He said at the time, the instruction He gave was designed to serve them after He was gone...
 - The time would come when they would be filled with the Holy Spirit and then by the Spirit, they would not only remember what He said, but also understand it.
 - And then they would be able to provide instruction for the entire church—instruction that they have given us in the Bible until the end of this world.
 - How grateful we ought to be for the Holy Scriptures where we have this instruction from men that were carried along by the Holy Spirit so that all that they said was the very word of God, without error or distortion, just as God has designed it to be.
- The particular instruction in Mark 13 has to do with instructing us about what we can expect to experience as those who belong to Christ until the end of the world.
 - This is the longest discourse of Jesus recorded by Mark.
 - How helpful it is to correct our mistaken expectations so that we can continue in His service without stumbling!
 - It is chock full of warnings against expecting a life of ease in this world.
 - It is aimed at preparing for the hardships that we will face until He returns.

- He does not want us to be caught off guard lest we be discouraged.
- We will take three weeks to look at this discourse which is called the Olivet discourse.
- Today, we will look at the first thirteen verses.

Please give careful attention as I read these words to you, because as I have already reminded you, these words are God's Word, given to us for our instruction and blessing.

Mark 13:1-13: Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*" ² And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." ³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" ⁵ And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He,*' and will deceive many. ⁷ But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end *is* not yet. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against

kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows. ⁹ But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy word and may He help us to understand and apply it.

In God's providence, the stage is perfectly set for Jesus to give this instruction.

- Since arriving at Jerusalem for the Passover, Jesus and His disciples had been going up to temple each day—
- And on the day that Jesus gave this discourse in Mark 13,
 - we are told that one of Jesus' disciples speaks to Him about the magnificence of the temple:
 - Mark 13:1 says: **Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*"**
 - Indeed, we are told by historians that the temple at Jerusalem was the greatest temple in the world.
 - Herod had spared no expense in rebuilding it.

- The work had been going on for more than 40 years.
- We are told of one eight year period in which 10,000 slaves were constantly employed—which means that even at a cost of 25,000 dollars a year, we are looking at two billion dollars just for the labour.
- Josephus tells us that there were huge polished marble stones that were 40 feet long, 18 feet deep and 12 feet high—these would weigh a million pounds.
- The brilliant polished white walls could be seen shining in the sun as you approached, and they were adorned with much gold.
- The temple complex, as we have noted before, was half a kilometer in length and about a third of a kilometer in width.
- So this disciple of Jesus, perhaps after hearing Jesus say that Jerusalem’s house would be left desolate (as Matthew informs us He had just done when He had denounced the scribes and Pharisees),
 - exclaims to Jesus about the great stones and buildings—
 - surely it was hard to see how this house could ever be desolate.
- Yet, Jesus responds to this disciple in verse 2, where it says:
 - **And Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”**
 - Surely this must have set all the disciples’ minds in high gear as they contemplated these words—not one stone left upon another!
 - We are told of no immediate response as the company makes their way from the temple to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus sits facing the temple.
 - The Mount of Olives was about three hundred feet above the city, so here Jesus positioned Himself with His face toward the glorious temple.
 - Indeed, the stage is now set for what follows.

I want you to see first of all that...

I. Like us, Jesus’ disciples were quite eager for the kingdom of glory to come.

A. Their question is quite loaded.

- Look at verse 3-4: **Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”**
- 1. To understand what they are getting at, we need to think about where their minds were at this time.
 - Not that we can read their minds—of course we can’t do that—but we know what they were constantly thinking about at this time.
 - Mark has told us repeatedly.
 - They had visions of glory.

- In their minds, the Messiah was to establish God’s glorious kingdom; and of course that is all true. That is something He is going to do.
 - The only problem was, the disciples thought that the kingdom of glory would be established right away.
 - They had been asking if they could sit beside His throne.
 - They had been thinking about which of them would be the greatest.
 - Even after Jesus died and rose, the first thing they wanted to know was, as it says in Acts 1:6, “**Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**”
 - This is the thing that has been constantly on their minds.
2. We need to know that in Jewish thinking about eschatology—the doctrine of last things—
- it was the common understanding that the temple would stand until the end of the world. So they concluded that when Jesus said not one stone would be left upon another, it meant that Jesus was speaking about the end.
 - They were excited.
 - At last, He was telling them that His kingdom of glory was going to be set up—and had He not said that the destruction of Jerusalem would come in this very generation?
 - They were putting two and two together based on their understanding, and they concluded that finally they were going to see the consummation of all things!

TRANS> How they wanted Him to come.

- An end of suffering. An end of idolatrous Roman rule.

B. We are much the same way today.

1. Christians have always been eager for Christ to come in their own generation.
 - You can see it in almost every period of history.
 - We very much hope that He will come in our day.
 - “Come quickly, Lord Jesus!”
2. Indeed, it is a good thing for us to want Him to come.
 - He is our Lord and we want to see Him.
 - It will be the most glorious day in all of history.
 - All flesh will see Him and we will see all those who loved Him before the presence of His glory, perfected in soul and body.
 - Satan and all of those who have no regard for Christ and His kingdom will be sent to the place of destruction.
 - His glorious kingdom will be established on earth and there will be no more curse, no more sorrow, no more sin—it will be a world where He is honoured forever and where love is written in the heart of everyone and constantly practiced.

- What rejoicing there will be, with a joy that will grow deeper and deeper for all eternity!
3. It is good that we want Christ and His kingdom of glory to come, but there is a danger with us presuming that He will come before we experience much suffering...
- a danger when we presume that we will not have to bear the cross and suffer hard things in this world—that we will bypass all that,
 - even that God would not want us to experience that.
 - Instead of arming ourselves for the conflict we must face and the war we must wage, we become soft and effeminate.
 - We do not put on the armour of God and we become discontent with our situation and become like Israel in the wilderness—
 - always complaining that it is too hard for us to go on, too hard for us to obey, too hard for us to go on in our service,
 - always disputing with what God has called us to do, that it is too hard, that surely He does not ask so much of us, that we have borne our afflictions too long,
 - always unwilling to go to war against our enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil.
 - The fight is not in us because our eyes are on gaining a life of ease.
 - We start to behave like powder puppies.
 - It is shameful to see how little it takes to stop us when we consider the hard things that many of our brothers and sisters endure cheerfully for Christ.

II. See how Jesus warns us about supposing that He will return before we ever have to experience much suffering.

- When we first hear His answer, it almost seems as if He is avoiding the question, for they have asked when the temple is going to be destroyed—
 - and Jesus starts talking about being deceived and having to suffer.
 - But Jesus has not misunderstood their question at all.
 - He understands that they are expecting Him to come right away and set up His kingdom of glory so that they will not have to suffer, so that they will never have to take up their cross—they are looking for a kingdom of prosperity and ease that will immediately come.
- A. The first thing He does is warn them about the danger of false Christs.
- Look at verses 5 & 6: **And Jesus, answering them, began to say: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many.”**
1. This is a constant danger for anyone who thinks that suffering is not a part of God’s plan for us in this present age—or who just “feels” that it is wrong.

- If that is what you feel, you will fall into the hands of some prosperity preacher like Joel Osteen or Kenneth Copeland.
 - They will tell you that it is not God’s will for you to suffer in this world.
 - They will tell you that He wants you to be happy and successful in the way that the world measures happiness and success.
 - It is a very enticing doctrine, and they dress it up with some out of context scripture to make it sound like it comes from the scripture.
2. These false Christs can come in all different forms.
- a. There are those, such as the pope at Rome, who actually claim to be the vicar of Christ—they come saying that they are in His chair on earth—even that they are He.
 - Then they proceed to promise salvation by penance, by ritual prayers and ritual works, by sacrifices they offer for you, by works of merit done by the saints.
 - b. Then there are those “Messiahs” such as health remedies or remedies for losing weight and gaining the perfect body.
 - Or those advertisements that make you think you will be happy if you get rich with their get rich quick scheme—
 - Or if you visit their porn site and indulge in some fantasy—
 - Or if you take their anti-depressants.
 - c. And of course there are always those politicians who want to think that they will be able to save you from COVID, from economic failure, from global warming, from almost every unhappiness...
 - They act as if they have resources that only God has—and when we believe them, we forget that they have no wealth except what they get from us—they do not generate wealth.
3. The problem is idolatry—it is to take something that is not the Son of God and to put it in the place of Christ so that we suppose happiness will come from it even though it has no ability to ultimately make us happy or secure.
- Those who are deluded that suffering is not God’s will for them in this world are very easily deceived by these false Christs with their false promises.
 - Right now in these stressful times, people in our society are going after these false Christs.
 - Jesus’ words are very timely—“Take heed that no one deceives you.”
 - Idols bring you into bondage and fear.
 - Christ sets you free—but calls you to bear the cross in this world and to expect suffering.

TRANS> See how after warning us against being deceived by false Christs...

B. He tells us to expect the troubles that are common to all people in this fallen world.

1. Look at the many different kinds of troubles He speaks of.
 - a. In verse 7, it is wars and rumors of wars.
 - They are consequences of this sinful, fallen world.
 - We see social and political upheaval, we see riots and unrest.
 - They will continue in the world and we will have to bear them.
 - b. In verse 8, He goes on to speak of how nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.
 - We see the hostility that goes on between the nations and how they actually begin to attack one another.
 - War time is very hard—our young men are lost in battle and sometimes our nation is overthrown and we fall under the dominion of an enemy who oppresses us.
 - We are not exempted from these things as believers.
 - c. Jesus adds to this list (in verse 8) natural disasters—**earthquakes in various places, and famines**—and He adds to this simply **troubles**.
 - This list is just suggestive—we could had hurricanes and viruses and pestilence—the list could go on and on.
2. But notice those words in verse 7, **“Do not be troubled.”**
 - a. Don’t let all of these things disturb you and make you unfit to serve others.
 - We need to hear this—we have become so weak in our pampered situation where we have so much ease that we are troubled and unsettled by the least disturbance.
 - Just see how this virus has disturbed us so much that our reaction to it has caused more destruction than the virus itself.
 - The death of the poor because of economic shutdown...
 - The death of those who did not go to the hospital and died of heart attacks or strokes, or who because of their anger and fear have taken their own lives or injured others.
 - Don’t be troubled, in the sense of being surprised—as if something has gone wrong.
 - b. Jesus explains that we should not be troubled by all these things. Why not?
 - 1) We should not to be troubled because these things must be.
 - These things must be because without them, no one in this fallen world would ever seek the Lord.
 - They are a foretaste of God’s judgment that will come in full force at the last day—and of which we would be completely oblivious if there were no troubles in this present time.
 - 2) We should not be troubled by these troubles because the end is not yet.
 - These troubles ARE NOT signs of the end.

- This is one of the most ignored and misinterpreted verses in the whole Bible by popular preachers and many believers.
 - You hear Christians say it all the time—“we must be at the end—look at all the wars and rumors of the wars—look at the storms and the troubles—surely the Lord is coming soon. He said that these would be signs of the end.”
 - But look at what Jesus actually says—just exactly the opposite—that these are NOT signs that the end has come!
 - **For such things must happen, but the end is not yet.**
 - J. A. Alexander says: The necessity of this caution, not to the first disciples merely but to their successors, is abundantly apparent from the well-known fact that pious men in every age have been continually falling into this mistake. It would be easy to evince, by a catena of quotations from the earlier and later fathers, from the medieval writers, the reformers, and the protestant divines of the last three centuries, that this propensity to look on national commotions and collisions as decisive proof that the world is near its end, has never been extinguished in the church. There are no doubt truly devout Christians at this moment drawing such conclusions from the mutiny in India and the war in China, in direct opposition to our Lord’s command, which, even if directly applied only to the first disciples and their times, involves a principle admitting of a no less certain application to ourselves and our times. The meaning is not that such changes may not be immediately succeeded by the greatest change of all, but only that they are no sign of it, and ought not to be so regarded.
 - James Edwards comments: “The purpose of the litany of woes is not to lure believers into speculations about the end, but to anchor them to watchfulness and faithfulness in the present.”
- 3) We need to see these troubles not as accidents but as purposeful—as sent by the hand of our heavenly Father.
- In verse 8, Jesus says that these things are the beginnings of sorrows.
 - The words in the original refer to birth pangs—labour pains—that bring forth life—they are fruitful—they have a purpose.
 - And as believers, we need these troubles so that we can learn to serve God and to love others when it is not easy to do so.
 - That is how our love is developed—we grow stronger when we have to love those who have wronged us, or when we have to help others when we don’t feel like it.
 - It is part of God’s training of us for His kingdom of glory.
 - Don’t grumble and complain.

- Bear all that God gives you with cheerfulness the same way an athlete looks at the pains he must endure in his training.
- Don't start speculating that the end has come when trouble comes as one looking to get out of the mess—
 - How can you prepare yourself for the battle if you are dreaming that you won't have to go to battle?
 - Jesus would never have gone to the cross if He had taken that approach.

C. And now Jesus tells us of additional troubles that we will face as believers!

- Not only do you have to bear the troubles that are common to all people—you also have to bear affliction that comes to those who follow Christ.
1. In verse 9, He tells us that we will be brought before both church and civil rulers and punished unjustly just because we are following Him.
 - He says (v. 9): **“But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.”**
 - a. Dream not that everyone will be pleased with you for following Jesus.
 - Some of your bitterest opponents will actually be those in the church who are religious, but who oppose the true and living Saviour.
 - When they meet His true disciples, they want to destroy them because our testimony is that salvation is from Jesus, not from our own works or goodness.
 - They hate that message because they know deep down that it is true and they don't want to believe it.
 - So they attack you for Jesus' sake and you are brought before them to testify of Jesus.
 - Many people have come to believe through the testimony of Jesus' followers when they have been brought before church and civil leaders.
 - Just read the book of Acts and you will see many examples.
 - Read the history of Martin Luther and you will see how he was brought before the church to testify.
 - How many came to believe through his testimony!
 - b. Don't suppose that the something has gone wrong when you are opposed for following Christ.
 - Don't focus on how to escape, but focus on how to honour Christ.
 - Some of you young people—you may have to face much persecution for Christ in the days to come!
 - It is very alarming to see how much believers are starting to be openly opposed.

- Jesus says, “Watch out for yourselves.”
 - Be ready to face the battle and to stand firm.
 - Maintain your commitment to Jesus—walk with Him—learn of Him—learn of His ways—drink deeply of His word.
 - Cultivate a deeper love for Him.
 - Don’t look to get out of it—look to be prepared to bear it—expect it to come.
2. In verse 10, **Jesus says that the gospel must first be to the nations...** it must be preached to them before the end comes.
- a. Persecution is one of the main ways the gospel gets preached.
 - Expect it. It is an answer to your prayer that His kingdom will come.
 - b. Jesus promises that He will help you when you are called to testify.
 - 1) His promise about this is given expressly to the apostles in verse 11.
 - **“But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.”**
 - The apostles had the gift of prophecy and could speak the very word of God. We are not divinely inspired like that.
 - 2) But many Christians can testify to how they have been helped by God’s Spirit to answer when they were defending what they believe to adversaries.
 - They have been given a special insight and clarity to help them.
 - This promise has implications for every believer...
 - You don’t have to worry about what you will say—the Lord will help you and you will often learn from yourself at such times.
 - The thing you must avoid is speaking what is not true to God’s word.
 - When you start to leave out part of the message that you know because you think it might upset those you are testifying to, you end up being a false witness to your master.
 - Speak only what the Spirit has given to us, not out of your own wisdom.
3. In verse 12, Jesus tells us how far this opposition to us for His sake will go. It is no light thing.
- a. It will extend even to our own family members:
 - **“Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake.”**
 - Think of it—this is how far hatred to Christ will go—so far that even a parent will want their own child to die.

- b. Jesus knows how we are inclined to dream that we will not face much opposition.
 - Certainly, we are not to go looking for it and trying to provoke it, but neither should we be unprepared for it, supposing that our Lord will sweep us out of the world before we ever have to face it.
 - He wants you to be ready.
 - He wants you to know that it may come to that.

Conclusion: You see that Jesus has gone out of His way to make it clear to us that we ought to expect to suffer in this world.

- Yes, Jesus is going to come at the end of the age and He will bring all of us who have trusted in Him to glory.
 - There will be righteousness and peace, and suffering will be no more.
- But until then, it is His will for us to suffer for His sake.
 - Until then, it is for us to endure.
 - He does not want us to start looking for Him to snatch us away every time trouble starts to come to us.
 - This is not the kingdom of glory now, this is the kingdom of grace.
- Do you know what that means?
 - That means that at this present time, you do not look for paradise, but you look for grace to serve the Lord and to grow and to bear fruit in the trials of life.
 - It is not that you look to be so strong that you can stand on your own, but that you look to your faithful Saviour to keep you to the end.
- And you see what His promise is to us if we endure to the end—to the end when He does come:
 - **He who endures to the end will be saved.**