

Daily Bible Study

“An Introduction to The Olivet Discourse”

Mark 13

March 18 – March 24, 2012

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –This week we come to **Mark 13** and we enter into a study of what is called by many students of Scripture, “The Olivet Discourse”; namely because it was on the Mount of olives that Jesus gave this teaching. This chapter of 37 verses which parallels **Matthew 24-25** and **Luke 21** is called the hardest chapter in Scripture and for good reason. We will just introduce it this week and talk about some issues that are pertinent for our study and understanding of the text. Take some time to read the text in its entirety as we introduce it. **Mark 13:1-37**: *“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!’ 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.’ 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?’ 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. 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. 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. ‘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. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 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. 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. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ‘So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not’ (let the reader understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. ‘Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, He is there!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. ‘But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great*

power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me from Your Word as I study this piece of Scripture.

TUESDAY – I personally feel some reluctance in coming to this chapter and it is not merely over the difficulty it can offer in study. One real concern is that many Christians get all revved up to study such passages, passages dealing with eschatology and such, yet fail miserably to practice the simple and straightforward things that are clear and without question in Scripture. There is some frustration frankly in teaching a passage like this which draws so much interest when we still don’t seem to see the importance of practicing such things as faithfully attending corporate worship, prayer meeting, gathering together, and adjusting our calendars and priorities *to love the Lord with all our hearts...and our neighbors* (starting with one another here in our local church) *as ourselves*. I literally pray to God that we would humbly walk in obedience to the things we have been taught already from the previous 12 Chapters of Mark as well as the rest of Sacred Scripture. With that said, we do need to be excited to study God’s Word, even the more difficult parts, and be excited and eager to obey what we learn. Read **James 1:19-26**.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to be serious about You and obedience to Your Word. Help me faithfully and eagerly do what I already know pleases You as revealed to me from Scripture.

WEDNESDAY – As I mentioned this particular chapter is one that can be a bit difficult to interpret. Just when you think you are getting it hammered out and finding a place for all your thoughts and ideas, you run into a verse which challenges your interpretation. As we study all of Scripture generally and this portion specifically we need to make sure we don’t miss the main point of Jesus teaching. There’s a reason Jesus said, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on*

these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-40). Often we lose sight of the very MAIN idea that is in view or the main truth being conveyed. In this particular portion, we can quickly get lost in debates over what time Jesus is speaking to and fail to miss that regardless the timing of the events discussed the overall call for us to be watchful and faithful is all over the text. The Olivet Discourse of **Mark 13** as well as the two chapters of **Matthew 24-25** clearly emphasizes the necessity of always being on the alert, active for our Lord and Master, and living faithful to Him, yet this I'm quite confident is not the primary thing we as Christians take away from it. How slow we are to listen and truly learn because of the blindness of our sinful hearts and minds. The disciples suffered from this very same ailment...the disease of being a sinner and needing a Savior. So as we begin to discuss details and timing and events may we be aware to back up and remember to *Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is...Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!*"

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to recognize it is not whether I can stump all the scholars with "my handle" of the difficult texts; but rather, if I can walk in obedience to the simple straightforward call of Scripture. Help me to have eyes and ears to not miss the main point.

THURSDAY – Looking specifically at **Mark 13** we find it can be broken down into some different sections which may help us in our study. This, like any portion will have even differing opinions as to the breakpoints depending on who is teaching or leading. We may not hold to this exactly as we walk through the chapter, but for a simple summary, they are: **Verses 1–4:** The question of the disciples concerning The Temple and its predicted destruction by Jesus. **Verses 5–13:** The time of deception, persecution and beginning of sorrows. **Verses 14–23:** The time of tribulation. **Verses 24–27:** The Coming of The Son of Man. **Verses 28–31:** The Lesson from the fig tree. **Verses 32–37:** The exhortation and necessity to watch and always be ready in view of the unknown time of the master of the house's coming. We will see that from the very start of the chapter we need to be careful to see what exactly what were the disciples asking Jesus and to do this we will take all the synoptic gospel records into account. You can be slanted in your interpretation if you limit yourself to only one Gospel record in this particular teaching; we will draw on Matthew and Luke when needed to help us clarify. We also are wise to use a method called the "Analogy of Faith" when studying Scripture. The "Analogy of Faith" so called is a principle of Biblical interpretation taught by the Reformers which teaches that Scripture should interpret Scripture. Westminster Confession (1.9): "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." Also helpful is Charles Hodge's comments: "If the Scriptures be what they claim to be, the word of God, they are the work of one mind, and that mind divine. From this it follows that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture. God cannot teach in one place

anything which is inconsistent with what He teaches in another. Hence Scripture must explain Scripture. If a passage admits of different interpretations, that only can be the true one which agrees with what the Bible teaches elsewhere on the same subject". We will use this method and should always use it to prevent "grab and go" Bible interpretation which takes pieces out of context to teach a point. Read **2 Timothy 2:15**.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me be wise in my study of Scripture and go to places You seem to speak more clearly on certain subjects to help me where I find difficulty in my interpretation.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – We already mentioned one very important place (the beginning question) where many interpretations can go awry. We will find there are several portions of this discourse where we need to be careful and examine what exactly is said. For another couple examples let me first cite **verse 30** which is a BIG one: It says, "Assuredly, I say to you, *this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*" That is a strong statement which bears heavily in one's interpretation of the text. Who is Jesus speaking about here? We will examine and see. A verse such as this would cause us to be more persuaded that these destructive things He speaks of previously must already have taken place since *this generation* has since died. But before we put the whole text into history we find in the latter portion of the discourse recorded by Mathew in **Matthew 25:31-46** that Jesus speaks to a time of judgment which appears to be at the very end of world history as we know it. That, along with other statements in the discourse such as ...*Immediately after the tribulation of those days...Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven...And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other* seem to push some of the discourse into the future for even us today. These type of statements are seen by many good Bible scholars to be forms of "prophetic foreshortening", by means of which before one's eyes the widely separated mountain peaks of historic events merge and are seen as one such as the judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the final judgment of the world at the close of history as we know it. Finally, as we begin this portion beloved, take heart, God knows and holds all things together and will carry out His will for our good as His people and His glory. I will undoubtedly be mistaken in some of my interpretation as will you, but He never will. Read **Isaiah 46:9-11**.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for being in perfect control of all things. Help me to study Your Word with seriousness and fervor yet remember, "The secret things belong to the Lord".