

Daily Bible Study

“The Coming of The Son of Man”

Mark 13:24-27

June 3 – 9, 2012

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –This week we continue our study of our Lord’s “Olivet Discourse” as it is called. We will be taking **Mark 13:24-27** as our new text. We have spent three sermons and will again take a portion of a fourth looking back at **verses 1-23** of this discourse of our Lord where we addressed the matter of Jesus answering the disciples’ questions concerning the destruction of The Temple. They had asked when will these things be and Jesus had answered them. We will review briefly before we move ahead. Our new text is **Mark 13:24-27**: *“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.”* As I mentioned last time, here at this section is where many Christians begin to really move toward Jesus’ words talking about the Second Coming at the end of time as we know it but I would just caution us to not rush ahead with any or all of our presuppositions and learned behaviors but to just step back and look at Scripture closely. Picking the text up in **verse 24** many Christians have clearly moved to the end of time. To be fair, on the surface it does sort of sound like the Second Coming of Jesus, right? But is it? Or, is it possible that Jesus is still describing events pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age of Temple worship with its shadows?

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

TUESDAY – **Mark 13:19-23**: *“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.”* By way of review, We said that these verses are where the origin of the term Great Tribulation comes from (see also **Matthew 24:21**). We saw briefly last time in the service that the Greek is interesting here. The words “those days” are in the nominative case in the Greek text, and are therefore the subject of the verb. The correct rendering is “Those days will be a tribulation.” We often hear and use the expression “evil days”, these mentioned by our Lord will be “tribulation days”. We also saw that Luke sheds light on what the “Great Tribulation” days will be made up of from **Luke 21:24**: *“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”* This is precisely what did happen; they were slaughtered by the sword in great numbers, many people were taken captive into Egypt and various other places as slaves

(97,000+), and JERUSALEM as a city was trampled. We also read of Jesus speaking of His protection of *the elect*. We know the word *elect* means “chosen, to choose” and it is given to Christians because they are in fact, “*chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,*” **2 Thessalonians 2:13**. God always has and always will look out and do what is good for His *elect* (chosen) people. Finally, from **verses 20-23** we saw that Jesus warns His men about being deceived. Remember the Jews expected the Messiah to deliver them from Roman oppression. They would be especially vulnerable and anxious for this in a time of great calamity. Men would claim to be Messiah, many would follow and Jesus warns to *not believe it*. We understand from Jesus words that true faith in Him is safe and secure by His power and His elect can’t be ultimately deceived; it is not possible. After listing the sign and all His words of instruction and warning to watch, Jesus tells His disciples, *But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand*. Jesus said, don’t forget, watch, I have told you. He had answered their question of “*when will these things be...*” thoroughly.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me believe Your Sovereign providence works all things for my good and thank You that I am “kept by the power of God through faith”.

WEDNESDAY – **Mark 13:24-25**: “*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.*” As I have said before and will again, this is a challenging passage of Sacred Scripture, which Christians through the centuries have had differing opinions about. The differences are that some believe it to be discussing the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in 70 A.D., others see it speaking of The Second Coming of Christ which is yet to occur, and some see both events, described either in turn or blended together. What is Jesus referring to in the text? This is the important question; not what we think He is speaking about. God has given us minds to think so let’s do so. Mark paints a more vivid picture of this scene than does Matthew (**Matthew 24:29** ...*the stars will fall from heaven...* contrasted with **Mark 13:25** ...*the stars of heaven will fall...* which in the ESV reads, “*the stars will be falling from heaven*”). It as if they are falling one by one. Language like this is what makes many people look toward a cataclysmic destruction of the universe in the very end of time. It surely seems easy to say that is exactly what it sounds like. However we again need to think. If we read **Isaiah 13** we hear the very same language of stars falling and sun being dark etc... in a prophecy that Isaiah received concerning Babylon. Scripture mentions astronomical upheavals typically and often as it warns and prophecies of Gods coming judgment. This language as we see in Scripture can be interpreted in a literal or figurative way. Jesus is using unique language here in our text. One rule of Biblical interpretation is that if the Bible consistently uses a type of language in a given context, when we see (or better said hear) that same language we should look for that context. Here the language is that of astronomical disturbances and the context is most certainly also one of Divine judgment as the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and Temple attest to.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to pay attention to the warnings You give in Sacred Scripture concerning Your Divine Judgment and thank you Jesus for bearing my deserved penalty upon yourself.

THURSDAY – **Mark 13:24-25**: “*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.” Before I go into some historical eyewitness accounts of things taking place during the fall of Jerusalem which some would argue fulfill a literal interpretation of these things, let me say this. The **MOST** compelling reason to me or anyone for that matter to see a first century fulfillment of these things is **verse 30**. Jesus said, “*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.*” If you proceed with the assumption that Jesus is speaking of His Second Coming here you need to say that He was wrong when He said, “*all these things*” would take place within a generation. According to Jesus these things needed to take place in the time of “*this generation*”. That beloved is a very strong argument for first century fulfillment to this discourse. With that said, I would like to again quote Josephus, the Jewish historian who was eyewitness to the fall. “*Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. Thus also before the Jews’ rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskilful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night... Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one and twentieth day of the month Artemisius a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Besides these, a few days after that feast [of the unleavened bread], on the twenty first day of the month of Artemisius, a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it [the destruction of the temple in 70] of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding the cities. Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the temple] as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, ‘Let us remove hence’.* (The Jewish Wars, 6.5.3). Part of this account is reminiscent of the story from the life of Prophet Elisha where his servant feared capture due to the soldiers of Syria surrounding the city. But Elisha knew of God’s protection and prayed, “*Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see*”. Then, God answered and Elisha’s servant saw that, “*the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha*” (**2 Kings 6:17**). It is possible some people in Jerusalem were given a similar vision of the armies of the Lord, not coming to protect god’s Prophet but to carry out His judgment.

Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me trust that Your Word will come true regardless how I or anyone else perceives or understands it. Thank You that You work on behalf of Your people for their good.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY –Mark 13:26-27: “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.” Let us look at one last quote from history before we close with Jesus words. Tacitus, a Roman Senator and historian, recorded concerning the “things” taking place in these days, “*Prodigies had occurred, which this nation, prone to superstition, but hating all religious rites, did not deem it lawful to expiate by offering and sacrifice. There had been seen hosts joining battle in the skies, the fiery gleam of arms, the temple illuminated by a sudden radiance from the clouds. The doors of the inner shrine were suddenly thrown open, and a voice of more than mortal tone was heard to cry that the Gods were departing. At the same instant there was a mighty stir as of departure. Some few put a fearful meaning on these events, but in most there was a firm persuasion, that in the ancient records of their priests was contained a prediction of how at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers, coming from Judaea, were to acquire universal empire. These mysterious prophecies had pointed to Vespasian and Titus, but the common people, with the usual blindness of ambition, had interpreted these mighty destinies of themselves, and could not be brought even by disasters to believe the truth.*” Moving on now we must comment that a significant reason many Christians interpret this as speaking concerning the very end of time as we know it is because of the way Matthew records the disciples question; “*Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?*” the words “*end of the age*” lead many to assume He is speaking of the end of time. However, we do see Scripture refers to the end of the Jewish age and times of Gentiles and so on (**Luke 24:21**). Another example, Paul stressing that the “last days” were inaugurated at Jesus coming points out to the Corinthians that “*...they were written for our instruction upon whom the end of the ages has come*” (**1 Corinthians 10:11**). So again, it is possible Jesus was discussing not the events of the end of human history but of the end of the Jewish era which held to the Old shadow and type and rejected Christ Jesus the Messiah and all He fulfilled. Finally, what do we do with **verse 27** where Jesus speaks of sending *His angels*, to *gather together His elect from the four winds*? The language does sound to us a bit like **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** where Jesus descends and His elect are caught up together with Him and so on. Being fair however, the Greek word used here in **Mark 13** is *angelos* which literally means “messenger” and is derived from a word which means “bring tidings”. So, I say again, that it is possible Jesus is speaking of the Gospel message (of who He really is and was) going forth by human messengers who would be God’s messengers used to gather His elect into His Kingdom following this incredible upheaval which would cause all men to examine themselves. As mentioned, this passage has been differently interpreted by Christians through the centuries but I would like us to see that it can be understood pertaining to the events surrounding Jerusalem’s fall in 70 A.D.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You that regardless of how we see some of these details in Sacred Scripture, You are not at all confused and You will unfold Your plan through eternity for the good of Your Elect children. Praise You, who was and is and is to come!