

**Jesus With Us in Deep Trouble**  
**Mark 13:14-23**      Sat. May 13, 2017

**Hook:** Think of one day in history when it seemed evil had triumphed.

For us in our time: **9/11**. For those in many cities, the day of a terrorist attack. For many individuals: the day when we suffered a terrible tragedy, injury, or criminal action against us.

In Mark 13, Jesus is just two days from giving up His life for us. He is prepping His disciples for His departure (and teaching us) by telling about the time just before His second coming. The glory of Jesus returning to earth is preceded by darkest, most evil time in human history. For those who face that time and for whatever evil we may face, Jesus will deliver us through it. We are often delivered **from** evil; sometimes we are delivered **through** it.

**Last week:** Joel began this 3-week series about the future. We're covering one teaching Jesus gave as He and His disciples sat on **the Mount of Olives**: hence its name, the Olivet Discourse. He taught of the impending destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in AD 70, some 40 years from that time. He then spoke of what will happen in the time just before His return: signs in the natural world (earthquakes, famines), and signs in human behavior: spiritual deception and severe persecution of believers. Some of what Jesus describes occurs in the last 7 years of human history, a time we call the Great Tribulation.

The prophet Jeremiah described this time: **"Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it;**

**and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."** (Jeremiah 30:7) During this time, Israel comes to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and is severely persecuted for it. Sin increases exponentially in amount and severity. There is a "falling away" from God; in His place, people follow a world leader who declares that he is god, aptly named the antichrist. God's judgment is poured out on the world in a variety of ways. Some people repent and believe, but most don't. Human history moves to a close with God's judgment on the sin of mankind, and multiple final opportunities to repent.

In tonight's passage, Jesus describes the event that causes "all hell to break loose" and begins the second and worst half of the Great Tribulation.

**Read Mark 13:14-23**    **PRAY**

**:13    The abomination of desolation**

For the nation of Israel, the Tabernacle and then the **Temple** was central to their life as a people. It was at the Temple they met with God, according to a method of sacrifice and priesthood God laid out to Moses.

All access to God was preceded by sacrifice, and many animals were offered on the altar in behalf of the people. Once a year, the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the Temple, and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat for himself and the nation. God would sometimes reveal Himself in His glory in the Temple.

The abomination of desolation is a profaning of the relationship with God and the means of approaching Him. Term used 3x by the prophet Daniel, and he references **two events**: one past and one future. Let's look at the one that already happened to learn about the one still to come.

The first, in Daniel 11, speaks of a Syrian king who lived 400 years after Daniel called **Antiochus Epiphanes**. He ruled over what used to be the Greek empire, from Israel to Iran, but he wanted to expand his kingdom into Egypt. Antiochus sent his army to Alexandria, but he was checked there by the Romans, who were rising in power. The Romans told Antiochus that Egypt was off limits: he blinked, backed off, and went home... but he was furious. Nothing ruins a dictator's day more than dashing his dreams of world domination.

Antiochus already hated the Jews and had put severe restrictions on their faith in place. Returning from Egypt in a rage, he vented his anger on Jerusalem. This is what Daniel prophesies:

“Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.”  
- Daniel 11:31

In 168 BC, Antiochus attacked Jerusalem, killing 40,000 innocent civilians. He robbed the Temple, taking gold vessels from the holy place. Worst of all, he slaughtered pigs, boiled their flesh, and poured the broth over the altar, defiling it. He also set up a statue of Zeus in the holy of holies (Antiochus felt he was the embodiment of Zeus).

**Abomination:** an action so horrible that it leaves the place desolate, unable to be used for its former purpose. (That CT elementary school closed after the horrible shooting there: a modern abomination that left that school desolate)

Daniel also prophesied about a future abomination, and this is the one to which Jesus refers. In Daniel 9, he writes of a future world ruler who will dominate the world for a “week”. This week is understood to be a week of years, or seven years.

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;

But in the middle of the week

He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, -Dan. 9:27

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? This wicked ruler's 7-year reign will be divided in half by this awful event, the abomination of desolation. The apostle Paul tells us even more about the future wicked ruler who will bring this to pass.

...the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. - 2 Thess. 2:3b-4

So... this future ruler is called “the man of sin”, the son of perdition”. In other passages he is called the antichrist. His abomination? Setting himself up in the temple of God and claiming to be God Himself. Just as Antiochus put up a statue of Zeus in the temple and made people worship it, the apostle John describes in Revelation 13 how the Antichrist will have an image of himself erected. This image will be animated and interactive: it will speak and cause everyone who doesn't worship the antichrist to be killed. (cp. Rev. 13:14-15)  
**:15-18 RUN!**

**:15-18** Once the antichrist declares himself to be god and enters the future Temple, that's the signal for Jews (and all believers) to run into the wilderness! Don't hesitate! Don't delay to grab anything out of your house (15). If you're in the field, don't go back to get your jacket (16). Pregnant and nursing women will, of course, have to travel more slowly, and that will put them in great danger (17). Since these Jews and believers will seek hiding places in the wilderness, doing so in winter will make their task more difficult (18) People who love Jesus will of course refuse to worship the antichrist : at this moment, they must flee for their lives or be killed.

Rev. 12: 13-17 details how God Himself will supernaturally protect these mostly Jewish followers of Jesus from the overwhelming torrent of persecution that will be poured out against them by Satan himself.

### **:19-20 The Great Tribulation**

**:19-20** There have been many times people have had to flee for their lives from some brutal dictator (Even today, people of Syria & Sudan, Iraq and Middle East risk death to **cross Mediterranean**, fleeing from ISIS, Bashar al Assad). As bad as these times have been, this future trouble will be worst of all.

“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.

**Tribulation** is a common word, meaning to be squeezed between a rock and a hard place; experiencing extreme stress, and having no way out. All of us experience stress, and many times there is nowhere to go to escape it. But this is different: It will be seven years unlike any in history. Never will such trouble be visited on the earth as during the Great

Tribulation. Jesus reassures us that this terrible time will happen once, and once only... because He will intervene in human history to put an end to it.

“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.

Simply put, evil would triumph unless Jesus returned. So great is the carnage and destruction during the Great Tribulation that, unless Jesus intervened, all mankind would perish.

I’ve heard people wonder why God lets things get this bad. During these last years of human history, God allows evil to be fully revealed for what it is. Evil often masquerades as good today. There will be no more masquerade then. Evil will be seen in all of its depravity, sinfulness, and destruction; and God will be revealed in His holiness, goodness, and salvation.

Jesus shortened these days, not permitting evil to succeed, for “the elect’s sake, whom He chose”. The Greek word translated “elect” here is pretty straightforward: it means selected or chosen. Each person who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord has been chosen by Him. Jesus spelled this out as His ministry: “ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10) Before we heard or responded to the gospel, God was at work in our hearts, readying us, helping us be receptive to the good news. What incredible love and grace!

This fact has caused His children a lot of heartburn over the years. Like kids on the playground who know they’ve been chosen for a team, we can think we’ve been chosen because we deserve it, or for something we’ve done. We Christians can become arrogant, thinking we’re better than others because God has chosen us.

Worse, some Christians make it a parlor game to guess who has been chosen and who hasn’t. That misses the point of God revealing this fact, and it ignores God’s heart. God means for us to be even more secure in our relationship with Him, knowing He has chosen us by His grace. His heart is for all to be saved, and for none to perish. We ought NEVER to wonder, “Is that person chosen by God?”, for that limits God, His compassion, and His grace in how we respond to them. Everyone has to make a decision about placing faith in Jesus Christ, but He has been at work in our hearts, drawing us to Him.

Remember: these ones God has chosen are going through intense persecution and suffering. Many are killed because of their faith. If we face suffering, it’s not because God doesn’t love us! As these believers will do, we can take heart in God’s presence with us and His deliverance from or through evil times and suffering.

### **:21-23 The Danger of Deception**

In just two days from the time Jesus said these words, He would die in our place, be buried, then rise from the dead 3 days after that. After His resurrection, He would spend the next 40 days with His disciples, then ascend to heaven. The apostles would hear two angels tell them, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” -Acts 1:11

From that moment forward, all believers have been awaiting Jesus’ return with great anticipation. And from the first century onward, there have been false reports of Jesus’ return. We will hear Jesus teach about His second coming in the rest of this chapter next week.

**:21** These false reports will happen in the future, and they happen now. Jesus’ quick advice is this: if you hear about My return and you’re not with Me, it’s not true!

Bible says we will either be caught up to be with the Lord or raised from the dead when He returns. Every believer will know when Jesus returns because we will be with Him!

**:22** These facts of Scripture won’t stop false christs and false apostles from claiming to be Jesus. That pattern of deception has always existed: before Jesus came, people would claim to be God, like Antiochus did. After Christ had come, they would claim to be Him. Think of how many people have claimed to be gods, or the chosen prophet or spokesman for God.

It’s not hard to see that the same deceptive motive and evil spirit that will find full expression in the antichrist is out and about in our world now. The apostle John warns us of

this: Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. -1 John 2:18

The goal of these false christs and false apostles is **deception**, even of God's people. Why? So the devil might lead us astray, confuse us, ruin our lives and our ability to shine out God's light to others. Satan can't take away our salvation, but he can sure ruin our life and effectiveness. That's why Jesus said to be on guard: we might say "keep your eyes open".

And He helps us discern this spirit of deception. The apostle John puts it this way:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. -1 John 4:1-3

:23 This is why Jesus said to His disciples—and us, “see, I have told you all things beforehand.” When we hear of people claiming to be Jesus, we shouldn't be surprised. When we hear of people doing signs and wonders but practicing evil, that shouldn't shock us. When we hear people denying Jesus is God come in the flesh but claiming to be prophets, we shouldn't be shaken by them. Jesus told us these things would happen before they came to pass. He is in control!

### WRAPUP

It's undeniable that human history is racing toward its final tragic chapter. The first temptation of the first man and woman was the desire to be like God. The final days of human history will be dominated by a world ruler who thinks he *is* God. All of history, but especially the tribulation, demonstrates what would happen if man got to act as if he were God. He will, and when he does, the Lord Himself must intervene to prevent the annihilation of the human race.

In the midst of the darkest hour of history, when it seems as though evil has triumphed, God is still at work. In the midst of judgment, persecution, and war, He draws people to Himself and cares for those who trust in Him. Some He delivers from evil; others through it.

We may not be in the Tribulation now, but there is trouble all around us. At some time in our lives, we will almost certainly find ourselves in deep trouble, in the midst of turmoil or heartache. We may even suffer for our relationship with Jesus Christ. Others around the world are right now. In His strength, we can face whatever evil or suffering that touches our lives. He will give us a way of escape that we can bear it. More than that, He will give us His heart to help those in trouble.

### APPLYING GOD'S WORD TO MY LIFE

Please pray for believers around the world who are suffering now for their faith in Jesus Christ. (You can download a very informative guide called the 2017 World Watch List at [www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org))

Pray for any you know who are undergoing deep trouble at this time. How can you encourage them that Jesus is with them in the midst of their suffering?

Pray for any you know who are listening to or following “false christs and false prophets”. Ask one of our elders or pastors if you'd like some help in discerning between Biblical Christianity and false teaching.