

**Mark 13, The Olivet Discourse  
13:5-23, Conflict  
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**Overview**

1. 1-2, First Question
  - a) Disciples are impressed with the physical spectacle of the temple, in spite of the spiritual bankruptcy the Lord has just revealed.
  - b) He predicts that it will all be destroyed.
  - c) *Application*: Beware the danger of evaluating spiritual truth on the basis of carnal appearances.
    - 1) Europe's great cathedrals were the product of a corrupt and apostate church.
    - 2) The great temples of the Orient: Horyu-ji (oldest wooden buildings in the world) and Todai-ji (largest wooden building) in Japan, Angkor-Wat in Thailand
    - 3) Pyramids and Sphinx in Egypt
  
2. 3-5a, Second question: when will this happen, and what will be the sign of it?
  
3. Response has three movements. First and third are longer, chiastic, and end with an admonition.
  - a) 5-23, Conflict. Chiastic: there will be deceivers, wars, and persecution, but all leading to a witness. Admonition: "Take heed to yourselves," "Endure unto the end." Do not give in to the temptation to deny the Lord.
  - b) 24-27, Coming. "After that tribulation." This, not the destruction of the temple, should be the focus of their attention.
  - c) 28-37, Comfort. Again chiastic. Two parables to remind them that these events are sure; some will happen soon, others at a time not known in advance. Admonition: "Watch," *grhgorew*. Stay awake. Be ready for the Lord's return.

4. Chiasm of 5-23 is very detailed:

Warning: "Take heed"	5	23
Deceivers		
False Christs	6	
" + False Prophets		21-22
Social Strife		
Ordinary	7-8	
Extraordinary		14-20
Warning:		
"Take heed"	9a	
"endure"		13b
Persecution		
Public	9b-10	

5. *Application*: The warnings introduce two kinds of dangers against which believers should be on their guard in these last days.

- a) False Christs in the midst of social turmoil. The danger of succumbing to the utopian promises of a charismatic political figure. We are at risk of being lured away by the Carrot.
- b) Persecution against us because of our stand for the Lord. We are at risk of being turned aside by the Stick.

A. 5b-6, Deceivers

Many will falsely claim to be the Messiah. This has been a continual mark of this age: Bar Kochba, Father Divine, Jim Jones.

B. 7-8, Social Strife. Unpleasant but routine; contrast 14-20.

- 1. Characteristics: wars, earthquakes, famines, troubles (*wdinai* "birth-pangs")
- 2. Time: 7 "the end shall not be yet," 8 "beginning of sorrows"
- 3. Response: 7 "be not troubled." These are the normal expected conditions. Nothing particular to be upset about.

C. 9-13, Persecution

This central section of the chiasm is itself chiastic. Exhortations to faithfulness on the outside, then warnings of persecution, then in the center the witness that will result.

1. 9a, Initial exhortation: "take heed to yourselves." Cf. 2 John 8; Luke 21:34,36; 2 Cor. 13:5. A warning against apostasy or being drawn away. Recognize that you are in a hostile world that will do everything it can to derail you spiritually. Be on your guard. Contrast this with the lackadaisical attitude of many who feel that with their eternal fire insurance in place, they have no other worries.

2. 9b-10, What others will do to us.

Note first the syntax that binds this section together, then two progressions as we move through it.

a) Syntax: The first clause is {verb + pp}, then the succeeding ones are {kai + pp + v}, through v.10, which indicates that it belongs to this paragraph.

- 1) They shall deliver you to councils
- 2) and in the synagogues you shall be beaten
- 3) and before rulers and kings you shall be brought
- 4) and unto all nations the gospel must be published.

b) First progression: the Scope of the opposition.

- 1) Councils. The singular is the Sanhedrin (14:55; 15:1), the ruling body of the Jews. The plural includes the local ruling bodies of the synagogues, and considers

prophetically the meeting of the organized "church" down through the ages (Council of Nicaea, Council of Trent, Second Vatican Council). It is telling that "the church" should have adopted this term, which is everywhere in the Bible opposed to the people of God, for its plenary meetings! Beware of large organized religious bodies.

- 2) Synagogues. Lit. "into the synagogues you shall be beaten." The organized system pursues them into local assemblies, where otherwise they might hope to find refuge with other true believers. We see this dynamic in the book of Acts as the Jews follow Paul around, carrying their hatred for the gospel into the synagogues that he visits and stirring up opposition against him. Cf. Acts 14:1-19; 17:1-13.
  - 3) Rulers and kings, the civil authorities. Together with organized religion, a major adversary of God's people through the centuries.
  - 4) All nations. Before "the end" (v.7), they must hear, thus preaching the gospel serves to "hasten the coming of the day of God," 2 Pet. 3:12.
- c) Second progression: the believers' role shifts from passive in the first two clauses to active as a witness (3rd) or preacher (4th). Though the unbelievers seem to be in control, what is happening is a means of confronting them with the gospel.
- 1) An example of 1 Cor. 1:26-29, God's use of foolish and weak things to carry his message, so that he will receive the glory. What could be more helpless than a prisoner, stripped of the means of self-defense and of the privileges of a free man? The God who chose to come as a peasant in order to bring us salvation, asks that we be willing to be humbled so that his voice may be more clearly heard through us.
  - 2) This trend is a transition to the next paragraph.
- d) The motive for this persecution is "my sake." The believers are not suffering because of their own offenses, but because of the One Whom they represent.
- 1) John 15:18-21, we can expect no better treatment than our Lord received.
  - 2) 1 Pet 4:14-16, we are not to court persecution as evildoers, but to accept it nobly for the sake of Christ.
3. 11, What we will do. Explains how the testimony that issues from persecution will be produced.
- a) The command: twofold
    - 1) Don't worry.

- 2) Don't plan what to say.
  - 3) Speak what the Spirit gives you to say.
- b) The circumstance: "when they shall lead you away, betraying you." This is NOT a command against diligence in studying the word of God, or preparing for the responsibility of teaching. It is a comforting reassurance for circumstances "when effective premeditation would be impossible" (Swete).
  - c) The reason: God's Spirit will provide the appropriate words for the occasion.
4. 12-13a, What they will do  
Returns to the theme of persecution from 9b-10.
- a) The opposition is now more intimate; not just impersonal foes from the religious or political elite, but members of the family. Cf. Mic 7:6.
  - b) As in v.9, the believers do not suffer because they are bad people, but "for my name's sake," because they bear his name and represent him.
5. 13b, Closing exhortation: "endure unto the end" to "be saved." Corresponds to v.9, "Take heed to yourselves." This phrase appears three times in the NT: twice in Matt, and once here. Need to understand three phrases:
- a) Be saved. Cf. the call to discipleship in 8:35. The point here is not surviving physically; all the early Christians who carried out the bloody testimony predicted here in fact perished physically. The salvation in question is spiritual, the kind that comes when the body is lost.
  - b) Endure.
    - 1) Literally, to stay somewhere when others travel on.
      - a> Lk 2:43, The child Jesus in Jerusalem when his parents returned to Nazareth
      - b> Ac 17:14, Silas and Timothy in Jerusalem when Paul went on to Rome
    - 2) The noun is commonly translated "patience." The sense is steadfastness, constancy. Both words in the OT most commonly translate QVH "to hope, trust," the position of the believer whose faith in God is steadfast in the face of trial. Cf. Micah 7:7 "wait," in the context of 7:1-6.
    - 3) So the verb comes to mean "be steadfast, patient, constant." Here, the Lord recognizes that the coming trials may turn many away from their profession, but those who refused to be moved will be saved.
  - c) Unto the end. The Greek expression lacks the article: "unto

end," not "unto the end." With the article, the reference might be to the eschatological end of 13:7. Without it, we are in the presence of a common Greek adverbial idiom (see references below) meaning, "completely, fully, utterly, for ever." The promise of salvation is to those who stand fast throughout their life.

Uses of *eis* [to] *telos*:

1) NT refs:

a> *eis telos*:

- 1> This logion: Mt 10:22; 24:13; Mk 13:13
- 2> Lk 18:5; Jn 13:1; 1Th 2:16

b> *eis to telos*: 2Co 3:13

2) LXX refs:

a> *eis telos*:

- 1> Gn 46:4 "finally bring you up again"
- 2> Num 17:28 +ews "shall we perish utterly?"
- 3> Dt 31:24, 30 +ews "completely"
- 4> Jos 8:24
- 5> Jos 10:13 "to the end of one day"
- 6> Jos 10:20 + ews "until they were finished"
- 7> 1Ch 28:9 "for ever"
- 8> 2Ch 12:12 "altogether," completely
- 9> 2Ch 31:1 + ews "utterly"
- 10> Job 6:9 "completely", "for ever"
- 11> Job 14:20 "for ever"
- 12> Job 20:7 "for ever"
- 13> Job 20:28 "completely" or "for ever"
- 14> Job 23:3 ?
- 15> Job 23:7 "for ever"
- 16> Ps 9:7, 32; 12:2; 15:11; 17:36; 43:24; 48:10; 51:7; 67:17; 73:1, 3, 10, 11, 19; 76:9; 78:5; 88:47
- 17> Ps 9:19; 102:9 // *\_eis ton aiwna\_*
- 18> Ezek 15:4,5 "completely"
- 19> Ezek 20:40 "completely" or "for ever"
- 20> Ezek 22:30 "completely"
- 21> Ezek 36:10 "completely" (enumeration)
- 22> NOT in Daniel!!! Not distinctly eschatological term.
- 23> Amos 9:8 "utterly"
- 24> Hab 1:4 "ever" or "completely"
- 25> Apocrypha: Judith 7:30: 14:13; Sirach 10:13; 12:11; Aza 1:11; 2Macc 8:29

b> *eis to telos*:

- 1> Jos 3:16 +ews "completely"
- 2> = *\_LMNCX\_* in title of Pss. 4-6, 8-13, 17-21, 29, 30, 35, 38-41, 43-46, 48, 50-61, 63-69, 74-76, 79, 80, 83, 84, 87, 108, 138, 139

d) Summary: This verse (and its chiastic pair in 9a) emphasize the need of believers to persevere in the Christian life. No doubt building on these sayings, we have exhortations to perseverance throughout the NT:

1) Col. 1:21-23 We are reconciled "...if you continue in the

faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel..."

- 2) John 8:31 "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed."
- 3) Heb 3:6 "[Christ's] house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."
- 4) Heb 3:14 "we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

The point is not works salvation, but a clear emphasis that the sign of true salvation is a changed life that persists in godliness.

D. 14-20, Social Strife. The characteristics, time, and appropriate response show that this is very different from the age-long turmoil described in 7-8.

1. Characteristics: much more focused and specific than 7-8.

a) Daniel's abomination of desolation.

- 1) The reference: Dan. 9:27, when the Antichrist sets up an idol in the temple.
- 2) The types: the desolations of Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC (Dan. 11:31) and the entry of the Roman armies into the holy place in AD 70 (lampstand and table of showbread on Titus' Arch in Rome).
- 3) Further prophecy: 2 Thes. 2:4, the Man of Sin setting himself up as God in the temple.

b) Unprecedented tribulation *qlipsis* (19), which is why this period is sometimes called the "great tribulation," Matt 24:21 (parallel to this); Rev 7:14. Avoid two errors:

- 1) Don't neglect the distinction that the Lord is making here between this tribulation and those that have gone before. This one will be unprecedented.
- 2) At the same time, the difference is one of Quantity, not Quality. Tribulation has been an age-long phenomenon. See my notes on Rev 1:9. The word occurs 45x in the NT, of which 37 refer to the trials and difficulties that believers are to expect throughout the age. The burden of the NT teaching on this subject is not to assure us that we will escape the Great Tribulation, but to exhort us to be patient in the General Tribulation!
- 3) Note that there are believers on earth during this tribulation period:
  - a> for whose sake the Lord gives this teaching;
  - b> for whose sake the time is limited.

2. Time: unprecedented "from the beginning," 19. This is the culminating conflict, which God providentially shortens, 20. Contrast 7, "end is not yet."

3. Response: 14 "flee," 17 "woe," 18 "pray." Extraordinary suffering.

E. 21-22, Deceivers

Appears to be a higher level of deception than 5b-6:

1. Accompanied by false prophets, not just false Christs. Culminates in the false prophet of Rev. 16:13, referring to the second beast, the one out of the earth, Rev. 13:11, 14.

2. Accompanied by signs that could almost lead astray the elect.

3. *Application*: The return of Christ will be unmistakable, in great power and glory; if you have any question, it isn't he.

F. 23, Admonition

Once again, a warning not to be deceived by false Christs promising to solve great social problems. "I have foretold you," shows one purpose of prophecy: so that God's people aren't taken by surprise and don't think that God has lost control.