

The Olivet Discourse Part 2

Text: Mark 13:8-18

Introduction:

1. This is the longest recorded answer of Christ to a question in the Gospels which says something of its importance. Some have called it “the Little Apocalypse.”
2. Brief review: Israel in view, not the church. Remember the law of double reference.
3. In our previous lesson we looked at the setting of the discourse and then some features of the present age. In this lesson we will look at the beginning of sorrows which describes the first half of the tribulation period.

I. THE SETTING OF THE DISCOURSE (VS. 1-4)

- A. The Occasion of the Discourse (Vs. 1-2)
- B. The Location of the Discourse (Vs. 3a)
- C. The Question of the Discourse (Vs. 3b-4)

II. THE PRESENT AGE (VS. 5-7)

- A. Deceptions (Vs. 5-6)
- B. Wars (Vs. 7-8a)

III. THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS (BIRTH PANGS) (VS. 8-13)

The phrase “beginning of sorrows” refers to the early birth pangs of the tribulation period (the first 3 ½ years). The word ‘sorrows’ comes from the Greek word ‘odin’ (ὠδίν) which means “the pain of childbirth, travail pain, birth pangs” (Strongs). The word is translated ‘travail’ in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” There will be a number of nasty contractions in the early part of the tribulation as follows:

A. Conflicts (Vs. 8a)

1. “nation shall rise against nation” = these are large scale wars involving whole nations. The first part of the tribulation will be characterized by war and bloodshed as pictured by the red horse in Revelation 6:4.
2. “these are the beginnings of sorrows” = large scale warfare and bloodshed will be a feature of the ‘beginnings’ of the tribulation period. The birthing language paints a picture of the tribulation period progressing in intensity as the 7 years progress. The first half will be like nothing the world has ever seen (the seal and trumpet

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judgments) but the second half will be on another whole level of severity again.

B. Disasters (Vs. 8b)

1. Earthquakes – there have been more than 10,000 strong quakes with magnitudes of 6 or greater around the world in the last 100 years (approx.). Earthquakes also appear to be on the increase. However, these are but a tiny foretaste to the earthquakes that will shake the world in the tribulation period. One such earthquake is described in Revelation 6:12-17 with the opening of the sixth seal.
2. Famines – the inevitable result of warfare and natural disasters such as earthquakes. Even in our day, around 9 million people die of hunger each year and there are now concerns that figure will double due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ Approximately 3.1 million children die from undernutrition each year.² While these are heart breaking statistics, the tribulation period will be much worse as pictured in the black horse with the opening of the 3rd seal (Rev. 6:5-6).

C. Divisions (Vs. 8c)

1. 'trouble's = the word means "disturbance, commotion; metaphorically a tumult, sedition" (Strong's).
2. There will be uprisings, riots and civil unrest in the last days. While we are not in the tribulation period, we see the world moving towards it rapidly with the widespread anarchy and rebellion erupting across the world (e.g., BLM & ANTIFA in the USA).

D. Persecutions (Vs. 9-13)

"The previous warning (Vs. 5-8) stressed the perils arising from what would happen in the world; this warning directs attention to what would happen to them personally." (Hiebert) While these verses have application to persecution against Christians generally, we understand that it looks forward to the seven-year tribulation period where the worst persecution of believers in history will occur just before the Lord returns.

1. The Source of the Persecutions (Vs. 9, 12-13)
 - a. From Governmental Authorities (Vs. 9)
 - i. Ecclesiastical Rulers – "councils...synagogues" (Vs. 9a)
The 'councils' were "local, Jewish disciplinary courts attached to the synagogues. They handled cases of infraction of the law and charges of heresy. Cases that were too difficult were referred to the high Sanhedrin in Jerusalem." (Hiebert)

¹ <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/05/05/850470436/u-n-warns-number-of-people-starving-to-death-could-double-amid-pandemic>

² <https://www.worldhunger.org/world-child-hunger-facts/>

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- ii. Civil Rulers – “rulers and kings” (Vs. 9b)
 - iii. Note: Again, we note the law of double reference. This warning was pertinent for the Apostles who would go on to suffer persecution and martyrdom (except John) for the cause of Christ (e.g., Acts 5:40-41). And the persecution of Christians has been a hallmark of history from then to the present time. But we understand that it also looks forward to the future tribulation period where there will be unprecedented persecution of the tribulation saints.
 - iv. Luke 6:22 “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, **for the Son of man's sake.**”
- b. From Close Family (Vs. 12)
- i. Siblings betraying siblings (12a).
 - ii. Parents betraying children (12b).
 - iii. Children betraying parents (12c).
 - iv. Matthew 10:34-39 “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”
- c. From People Generally (Vs. 13)
- i. “hated of all men for my name’s sake” = the hatred directed against Christians is on account of their attachment to Jesus Christ.
 - ii. 1 John 3:13 “**Marvel not**, my brethren, **if the world hate you.**”
 - iii. John 15:18-21 “**If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.** If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: **but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.** Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours

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also. But all these things will they do unto you **for my name's sake**, because they know not him that sent me.”

- iv. Morison: "As there is nothing that excites such love as the gospel, when intelligently received, so there is nothing that occasions such hate as this same gospel, when passionately rejected."
2. The Sharing amidst Persecutions (Vs. 10)
 - a. The Gospel will be published throughout the world during the first half of the tribulation period by the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists (Revelation 7) and the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3). Matthew specifically says, "the gospel of the kingdom." (24:14)
 - b. Thomas L. Constable: "This verse is not a promise, that if disciples will preach the gospel to all nations in a particular generation, God will then begin the kingdom—as postmillennialists teach. Man cannot bring in the kingdom by the universal preaching of the gospel. God will bring it in at His appointed time. This is not a promise that everyone will become a believer in Jesus, either."
 - c. Note: This gives us a window into the heart of God. In every dispensation, men are given an opportunity to repent and receive His forgiveness. "It is part of God's eschatological purpose that before the End all nations shall have an opportunity to accept the Gospel." (Hiebert)
3. The Succor in the Persecutions (Vs. 11)
 - a. "take no thought" = means "to be anxious beforehand", thoughts in the sense of worried and troubling thoughts.
 - b. "whatsoever shall be given you in that hour" = they would be supernaturally enabled by the Spirit of God to face that moment.
 - c. Church history is replete with examples of courageous, Spirit enabled and anointed testimonies by believers in the face of persecution and martyrdom. Hugh Latimer was martyred along with Dr Nicholas Ridley in 1555 during the reign of bloody Queen Mary who viciously persecuted the protestant believers. As a lighted fagot was laid at Dr. Ridley's feet, Hugh Latimer said, "Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust never shall be put out." (Foxes Book of Martyrs)
 - d. Note: If you face persecution in the will of God, you can be sure He will fulfill this promise to you. But this is different to those who seek persecution or martyrdom in a self-generated zeal that masquerades as spiritual fervor.
4. The Sustaining in the Persecutions (Vs. 13b)
 - a. Within the context of the tribulation period, it means that those who survive to the end of that period will have their lives spared.

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- b. In relation to salvation, perseverance to the end is evidence of genuine faith. It is not teaching that one must endure in order to be saved but rather that one who is saved will evidence the reality of their salvation by patience endurance of such trials.

IV. THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION (mid-point of the tribulation) (VS. 14-18)

“This section forms the heart of the Olivet Discourse as recorded in Mark. It divides naturally into two paragraphs: 1. The event which inaugurates the unparalleled tribulation and offers appropriate guidance to His followers (Vs. 14-23). 2. The return of the Son of man in glory (Vs. 24-27).” (Hiebert)

A. The Sign the Jews are to Watch for (Vs. 14a)

1. The Prophet’s Prediction – “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” (Dan. 9:27)
2. The Antichrist’s Desecration – the antichrist will desecrate the temple, setting up an image of himself and declaring himself to be God.
 - a. 2 Thess. 2:4 “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”
 - b. Rev. 13:14-15 “And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” This chapter in Revelation documents the fearful, one world order of the Antichrist that will dramatically increase in scope and power during the last 3 ½ years of Daniel’s 70th week. The Antichrist will control the world politically, spiritually and economically.
 - c. Illustration: Modern Hologram Technology – “The ultimate fantasy pop idol is Hatsune Miku. One of the most popular Japanese pop singers of all time, she performed sold-out concerts attended by tens of thousands of screaming fans and opened for Lady Gaga. But she doesn’t exist. One hundred percent fantasy, she is an avatar created by the Japanese company Crypton Future Media. She is projected onstage as a dancing hologram. She is the ultimate scantily clothed pop

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singer of youthful fantasy with an unrealistically proportioned figure and a hyper-cute, Manga-influenced face. Girls fantasize that they are Hatsune, and boys fantasize that she is their girlfriend. One fan said, “She’s rather more like a goddess: She has human parts, but she transcends human limitations. She’s the great post-human pop star” (“Hatsune Miku: The world’s fakest pop star,” *CBN News*, Nov. 9, 2012).” (David Cloud – Fantasy Dangers)

B. The Site the Jews are to Run for (Vs. 14b-18)

1. The Speed of their Flight (Vs. 14b-16)

Note that this instruction is “not for the listening disciples but for future readers of Scripture. In the years immediately prior to the second coming, people will read Jesus’ words and, realizing they are in the midst of the final tribulation, be equipped to understand and endure the trials of that unparalleled trouble.” (MacArthur) To impress upon the **reader** just how urgent it was for them to flee without delay, Christ gives two scenarios:

- a. The Housetop Scenario (Vs. 15). The ‘houstop’ refers to the flat roof of the Oriental house. It was generally reached by an outside stairway (Mk. 2:2-4). It was used for various purposes such as sleeping (1 Sam. 9:25-26), keeping a watch (Isa. 22:1), worship (Zeph. 1:5; Acts 10:9), proclaiming tidings (Matt. 10:27) and the like. If a man happened to be up there when the crisis broke, he must rush down and flee without even stopping to remove anything out of his house for his flight.” (Hiebert)
- b. The Field Scenario (Vs. 16). The picture is of a man working without his cloak, the outer garment. He is not to return to the house or to the entrance to the field to take it.” (Hiebert) “The danger is so great that there is no time for any delay. Life itself is at stake.” (James A. Brooks)

2. The Sorrow of their Flight (Vs. 17)

3. The Supplication for their Flight (Vs. 18)

- a. This verse teaches the principle of praying for circumstantial mercies.
- b. Note: Have you thought of praying for that future day for Israel that God will grant them favourable weather for their flight from Antichrist?

Conclusion: Bible prophecy puts things in perspective. Are you living for eternity? “The purpose of prophecy is not to entertain the curious, but to encourage the consecrated.” (Wiersbe) Are you facing persecution and opposition for being a consecrated Christian? Facing battles with close family? Stay faithful to Christ and He will be with you. Remember their opposition is on account of your loyalty to Christ.