

Mark

Chapter Thirteen

Introduction

The Jewish Temple of the first century was a magnificent structure. The disciples, thinking that Jesus was about to usher in the kingdom of God on earth, remarked to Jesus,

Mark 13:1 "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

Jesus Himself had called the Temple "My house"¹ and had driven out those who defiled it. His house seemed ready to receive Him.

His "house" looked ready, but His *household* was rebellious! His encounters in Chapter Twelve with the religious leaders showed that the members of His household were not ready at all to receive Him.

The nation of Israel is called "the house of Israel" at least one hundred fifty-two times in the Bible. The Jews thought of the Temple itself as God's house, but Jesus thought of the Jews themselves as His household! When King David lamented that he dwelt in a beautiful house, but that the Ark of the Covenant still dwelt in a tent, he determined to build a house for God. Instead, David was told that God would build *him* a house!² The nation of Israel would be God's house, and the Jews the members of His household.

Jesus startled His disciples by prophesying the demolition of the Temple:

Mark 13:2 "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

¹Mark 11:17

²2 Samuel 7

The Jews had defiled the Temple; Jesus would depart from it; the Romans would destroy it.

God's "house" would be destroyed; but God's *household* would not! The Jews would be dispersed in order to be disciplined. The prophet Ezekiel wrote,

Ezekiel 39:23 "The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword."

For almost two thousand years God has dispersed the Jews among the Gentile nations of the world to discipline them. But God's dispersed household has not been destroyed! The Jews have miraculously remained an identifiable people.

What's more, God says in His Word that He will regather and restore the members of His household in the Last Days:

Ezekiel 39:25 "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name;

Ezekiel 39:26 'after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid.

Ezekiel 39:27 'When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations,

Ezekiel 39:28 'then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer.

Ezekiel 39:29 'And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord GOD."

In Mark Thirteen Jesus tells you how God will restore His household in the Last Days. The Jews will go through a period of great tribulation which shall come upon the whole earth just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish the kingdom of God on earth. The Jews - God's household - will persevere through the Great Tribulation.

You are in Mark Thirteen, too. The chapter ends with a parable that speaks of another household. The Parable of the Householder is addressed to all of us today.³ While the house of Israel is dispersed

³Mark 13:37

and being disciplined, you are God's household of faith.⁴ You - God's household - will be preserved from going through the Great Tribulation.

The Jews are the household that will persevere going through the Tribulation; you are the household that will be preserved from going through the Tribulation.

#1 The Jews Are The Household That Will Persevere Going Through The Tribulation
(13:1-31)

You must always carefully distinguish between the nation of Israel and the Church. Author Dave Hunt writes,

"Israel is distinguished from the church for all time by the land which God gave to her."⁵

The major promise to Israel for the Last Days is that she will be regathered from the nations where God dispersed her to dwell once more in the Promised Land and that Jesus Christ will rule over her from Jerusalem. The Church was never cast out of any land, and it was never promised that she would return to any land. The Church is promised a heavenly rapture, not an earthly regathering:

John 14:2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Mark Thirteen, up until verse thirty-two, is all about Israel in the Great Tribulation. It is not at all about the Church. It is filled with Jewish images: Jewish councils, Jewish synagogues, the defiling of the Jewish Temple, and Jews living in Judea. Jesus is describing the household of Israel during the Great Tribulation.

Mark 13:1 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!"

Mark 13:2 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."

⁴Ephesians 2:19

⁵*A Cup of Trembling*, p. 335.

Mark 13:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately,

Mark 13:4 "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

The disciples had kingdom confusion! They thought Jesus was about to establish the kingdom of God on earth. Startled by His words, they ask Jesus to clarify them. What follows is called the Olivet Discourse.

Jesus identifies a period of great and global Tribulation. The Old Testament prophets frequently wrote about this period. Jeremiah called it "the time of Jacob's trouble,"⁶ indicating that it was especially designed to finish God's discipline on Israel. The prophet Daniel specifies it as a period of seven years.⁷

Jesus describes the seven year Great Tribulation as having three distinct divisions: a first half, a middle, and a last half. The first half of the seven year Great Tribulation is discussed in verses five through thirteen.

^The First Half of the Great Tribulation...

...will be marked by counterfeit Christ's, by conflicts, and by catastrophes:

Mark 13:5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

Mark 13:6 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many.

Mark 13:7 "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.

Mark 13:8 "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.

The end of verse eight is a key statement: "These are the beginnings of sorrows." The word translated "sorrows" is *birth pangs*, suggesting that the world will be like a woman in labor. The birth pangs will come suddenly, build up gradually, and lead to a time of incredible tribulation for the whole world.

⁶Jeremiah 30:7

⁷Daniel 9:24-27

Jesus said, "Don't be deceived" by these things! They are not signs of His coming; they are signs that the Great Tribulation is only just beginning.

Today we do seem to be witnessing the acceleration of these very things: false Christ's, conflicts, and catastrophes. Taken by themselves they indicate to some believers that we have entered the Great Tribulation.

Beloved, these things have always been with us. It is interesting to me that we do seem to see these things accelerating; but by themselves they are not reliable indicators. There are other reliable indicators in Mark Thirteen that indicate when the Great Tribulation will begin. Most notable of all is that there must be a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, and the Jews must be worshipping there, in order for the world to be in the seven year Great Tribulation. We are not in the Tribulation.

Mark 13:9 "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.

Mark 13:10 "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

Mark 13:11 "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.

Mark 13:12 "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.

Mark 13:13 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

These verses are commonly misunderstood. They are misunderstood when they are applied to the Church. When applied to the Church, they seem to be saying that the Church must preach the gospel to everyone on earth before Jesus can return, and they seem to be saying that endurance is a condition for earning eternal life.

These verses are about the Great Tribulation! It is during the Tribulation that the gospel will be proclaimed to every creature on the face of the earth. For example, it is during the Tribulation that you read in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ,

Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth; to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people;

Revelation 14:7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

Jesus is speaking to Tribulation saints when He says,

Mark 13:13 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

During the intense persecution described in Mark Thirteen, true faith will be proven by endurance despite opposition.

These are the beginning of sorrows, the first half of the Great Tribulation.

The Middle of the Great Tribulation...

...is marked by a very specific event:

Mark 13:14 "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand)..."

The phrase "abomination of desolation" comes from the Book of Daniel. Daniel saw seventy periods of seven years, or 490 years, of God's prophetic dealings with the house of Israel. This period of 490 years began with the decree of King Artaxerxes in 445B.C. permitting the Jews he held captive to return to and rebuild Jerusalem. Four hundred eighty-three years later, Jesus came to Jerusalem and gave His life for sinners. That leaves a period of seven prophetic years unfulfilled. According to Daniel 9:27, a future world leader will sign a covenant of peace with Israel, allowing them to rebuild their Temple and reinstitute Temple worship and sacrifice. But after three and one half years this leader will break his covenant of peace with the Jews. He will bring about an end to their sacrifices and their worship. He will commit the "abomination of desolation" by entering the Temple and proclaiming himself as God, and by demanding to be worshipped as God. This man is the man we call the Antichrist. The Book of the Revelation calls him "the Beast."

This abomination of desolation will usher in the last half of the Great Tribulation.

The Last Half of the Great Tribulation...

...is a three and one half year period of intense persecution against the Jews:

Mark 13:15 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house.

Mark 13:16 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

Mark 13:17 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

Mark 13:18 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter.

The Jews are especially the target of the Antichrist because by this time he has become possessed by Satan. Satan tries one last time to defeat God's purposes for mankind by trying one last time to destroy the Jews.

Verses nineteen through twenty-seven describe certain prominent catastrophic judgments upon the earth during the last three and one half years of the Great Tribulation:

Mark 13:19 "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.

Mark 13:20 "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.

Mark 13:21 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it.

Mark 13:22 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Mark 13:23 "But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

Don't confuse the trials and tribulations God's saints of all ages go through with the Great Tribulation. Jesus said, "in the world you will have tribulation," but He didn't say you would be *in the world* during the Great Tribulation. You won't.

The last half of the Great Tribulation will go on for three and one half years, then Jesus will return to earth. When Jesus speaks of "those days being shortened," He means that the awful judgment brought upon mankind during those days will be limited to the prophesied three and one half years.

Mark 13:24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;

Mark 13:25 "the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Mark 13:26 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Mark 13:27 "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.

The Book of the the Revelation gives the details of the last half of the Great Tribulation. These comments of Jesus are a sort of summary. The Tribulation ends with the return of Jesus to earth in His glorious Second Coming. He gathers His elect together and they enter into the kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus mentions "the elect" in these verses. God's saints of all ages are the elect, both Israel and the Church. In the context of Mark Thirteen, the "elect" are the Tribulation saints. They are those Jews and Gentiles who come to faith in Jesus Christ during the Great Tribulation. If you are a saint today you will *not* be a Tribulation saint. The Church is *not* going through the Tribulation.

Jesus tells two parables in Mark Thirteen to end the Olivet Discourse. The two parables distinguish between the elect of the house of Israel, and the elect of the Church.

Mark 13:28 "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.

Mark 13:29 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near; at the doors!

The fig tree is a symbol of the house of Israel. The fig trees in Israel is one of the latest to leaf out in spring, so its shoots are an indication that summer is near. Saints in the Tribulation will be able to see the signs that the coming of the Lord is near.

Mark 13:30 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Mark 13:31 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

The word "generation" refers to the Jews alive during the Tribulation. This is a word of encouragement that God's elect nation will persevere going through the Great Tribulation.

Beloved, the return of the Jews to the Promised Land to reestablish their nation is one of the most significant prophetic events of all time. The story of God's dealings with the Jews is itself enough to validate the Bible. The first century Jewish leaders defiled the Temple; Jesus departed from it; the Romans destroyed it; God dispersed the house of Israel to discipline them.

God's great purpose is that "all Israel will be saved" through the Great Tribulation. All of Israel that is alive when Jesus Christ returns will see Him and believe upon Him as their Messiah and be saved.

While the house of Israel is dispersed and disciplined, God is calling disciples from all nations into His household of faith, the Church. The Parable of the Householder is about you today.

#2 You Are The Household That Will Be
Preserved From Going Through The Tribulation
(13:32-37)

The Parable of the Fig Tree emphasizes knowing that the coming of Jesus is near; this second parable emphasizes *not knowing* the time of Jesus' return. Is this a contradiction? No, because the two are addressed to different groups. The Parable of the Fig Tree cautions Tribulation saints to watch and know the signs of Christ's coming. The Parable of the Householder cautions all of us today to be alert because we don't know when Jesus will return to rapture the saints of the Church Age to heaven.

Mark 13:32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Mark 13:33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

Mark 13:34 "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.

Mark 13:35 "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;

Mark 13:36 "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

Mark 13:37 "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

Jesus is the householder Who has gone away. You are the members of His household. While He is gone, you are stewards of His gospel and have been given authority to minister for Him. Like any household, there are a variety of duties to perform. We want to keep a good house - the Lord could Rapture us at any moment!

Since you believe the Lord is coming any moment you will remain spiritually awake and alert. The doctrine of the imminent Rapture of the Church is a true help to a life of holiness as you await your Lord's return for you.

Beloved, if you are a saint today you will not be a Tribulation saint! The Rapture will occur before the Great Tribulation begins, and all born-again believers of the Church Age will be caught up to heaven to be with the Lord. There are sincere, godly Christians who will tell you that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation. We love them, but we strongly disagree with them. Their conclusion is often based on confusion - the confusion of the household of Israel with the household of the Church. God has a unique plan for the literal descendants of Abraham, the Jews, that involves regathering them to the Promised Land. God's unique plan for the Church is to Rapture you to heaven.

Conclusion

The household of Israel will persevere going through the Great Tribulation. You are the household that will be preserved from going through the Great Tribulation.

In the world you will have tribulation; but you will not be in the world during the Great Tribulation!

You are a member of a great household of faith. God has blessed you, not burdened you, with the stewardship of His gospel. You have the privilege of serving the other members of God's household, and of sharing the joys of membership in His household with all those who are outside.