

# ALL ALONG THE WATCH WORKER

## mark 13

Whole bunch of prophecy today as we get into the Olivet Discourse in Mark chapter 13.

Here's our text:

**Mark 13.1-37 - 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! "**

**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."**

**Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"**

**And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. 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. 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.**

**"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. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 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. 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. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.**

**"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. 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.**

**"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.**

**“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. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.**

**“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 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. 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— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”**

This is really just an amazing set of verses as Jesus opens up the book of future history and gives us a few pages out of it. He takes time to be very detailed and very specific. Which makes it all the more incredible that some groups and traditions try to see the Tribulation as allegorical and not literal. I mean, you read this and get the sense that Jesus was detailing very specific things that *are* going to happen in the future.

In fact, starting at verse 2 and on down through the rest of the chapter, we get all future prophecy. First, Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple in AD70, which did occur. But then the rest of the discourse talks about the Tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ.

Now, a while back my dad did a study on this whole section of teaching which is known as the Olivet Discourse. So our purpose this morning is not to take an in depth look at this prophetically, but to take a devotional look at this text and see how and if it fits for our own lives. Because, obviously, we take great comfort in the fact that we are not going to be present during this period of time the Lord is discussing, so the question is whether this is something we really need to pay attention to or if we just read it and sort of move on.

I think it is a great passage for us, and I think there are at least 3 good reasons from the text that can connect us to what the Lord is talking about.

First, when Peter, James, John and Andrew come to the Lord and ask Him about what He’s talking about, He didn’t just say, “Oh don’t worry about it. We’ll cover this stuff in Revelation or the Epistles.” He took the time to teach these 4 guys, and us by extension. So, obviously the Lord felt there were things that they could take away from what He was saying even if they weren’t going to be bodily present during these end times.

Second, we see the last verse, verse 37, which says:

**Mark 13.37 - “And what I say to you, I say to ALL: Watch!”**

So, Jesus is going out of His way there to include anyone who would hear Him. So that’s a good indication that we should pay attention to what’s going on and what’s being taught.

And then, third, verse 34, Jesus gives this little parable. He says:

**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.**

That parable certainly describes the situation we find ourselves in spiritually. We are servants of Jesus Christ. He has gone into heaven to prepare a place for us. He's given us power and authority to represent Him on the earth and He's given each of us a work to do, a life to live for His good pleasure, and we are commanded to watch and be ready for that coming reunion with the Lord either in death individually or in the Rapture corporately.

So if we're trying to apply this chapter to our own lives in a devotional sense, at first we might get a little concerned. Because from start to finish it's the story of suffering and struggle and destruction. Jesus just speaks frankly about the kind of opposition we are up against as Christians. And, honestly, it would be a little alarming if the Lord hadn't said what He said in verse 7 and 11: "Don't be troubled!" He says, "I don't want you to worry about this. These are temporal things and I've got a whole plan I'm working out. And you can be at peace."

And, really, that's what this chapter is all about. That's how this whole discussion got started back in verse one. Where the disciples pull Jesus aside and start boasting about how nice the Temple was and how beautiful the stones were and all that. And so Jesus stops them and does what He's done a number of times already in this book and He says, "Guys, you're thinking too small. You're thinking too temporal. I want you to think about heavenly things. Eternal things. Spiritual things."

And we, certainly, as post-pentacost Christians are given that same instruction throughout the New Testament, especially in the Parables and the Epistles. Paul says to us in Colossians:

**Colossians 3.2 - Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

So that's what we're called to. Now, the keys to actually accomplish that calling are given to us in this chapter. Jesus demonstrates that even in the midst of terrible trial or terrible suffering, even if we find ourselves in a world that is crumbling and falling apart because of wars and natural disasters and all that, we can still be hopeful and heavenly minded. The 2 keys are to **watch** and to **work**.

That's what Jesus says. He says in verse 34 that He's given each of us a work to do while He is away in a far country. And then in verse 37 He says to *everyone* **WATCH!** Be awake.

There's a bunch of stuff we're commanded to watch out for in these verses. We're to watch out for deception in verse 5, watch out for ourselves in verse 9. Tribulation believers are to watch for the Abomination of Desolation in verse 14. We're to watch to false christs, verse 21. Watch for signs of Jesus' 2nd coming, verse 29. And, finally, we're to watch for the coming of the Master in verse 35.

It's a lot of stuff, but for us this morning we can kind of sum all of that up into the simple idea that we're to watch for God in our lives. Be awake to Him. Watch out for the things He's doing.

Because God is reaching out to you. That's who He is. I mean, when you stop to consider who the target audience of this discourse is, it's pretty amazing. Yes, we all can benefit from this teaching, but the primary people Jesus is speaking to here are people in the Tribulation. People who rejected Jesus before the Rapture of the Church. To *them* God continues His outreach. And He says, "Hey, I'm watching out for you. I'm watching over you. So watch out for Me!"

And, of course, the same is true in our own life. God watches over us and reaches out to us. And then He does things in our lives so that we might see Him and know Him and love Him. And so, Jesus says to all of us, "WATCH! Don't waste your life trying to *avoid* Me!" Instead we should understand how mindful of us God is. He's thinking about us. He's watching us. And we're invited to watch for His work in our lives and His coming for us. To be awake.

But then there's another key that we see here. There's watching *AND* working. The little parable at the end there says that the master gives to each servant specific work to do. And then you combine that with other parts of this chapter, like verse 10 where the Lord says:

**Mark 13.10 - The Gospel must first be preached to all the nations.**

And we see that there's a very urgent *work* that God wants us to do.

It's kind of crazy to think about the attitude or the mindset of this chapter. On one hand, you have Jesus saying, "We need to get the Gospel out to the whole world because human history is coming to an end and no one knows the hour of the Lord's coming and you're going to be beaten and persecuted and martyred. There are going to be wars and famines and destruction." But then, in the midst of all of that, He says, "But don't worry about it. The Holy Spirit's with you. I'm watching over you. I have a plan. I have a power. I have a purpose for your life. I'm with you."

And, so, the best way I could think of to describe the sort of mindset we're called to in these last days is *casual urgency*. Casual in the sense that we're absolutely called upon to trust the Lord, to rest and be joyful and expect *Him* to accomplish the things He said He's going to do. But then to be urgent. To understand that this world is moving ever closer to an inevitable end and judgment. Everyone around us is headed for judgment. They're headed for death. Some of them are holding a ticket to heaven, some of them are holding a ticket to hell. And we have to have an urgency about what we do. We need to be less temporally minded and more eternally minded. Because all of the things we can get distracted by are temporary. The buildings and the conflicts and the material things, those are temporary. People's souls are eternal. And if we don't care about individuals dying and entering into a Christless eternity, then we don't understand what the Lord has been saying and what this life is all about. The disciples were talking about some man-made structure, some building they could boast about, and Jesus said, "Guys, you gotta get your head in the game. You gotta start thinking about the future, because this is the real deal. This is life and death."

I like how verse 9 is translated in the New Living Translation:

**Mark 13.9 - "When these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors**

**and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about Me.”**

I love that. Any situation of life, whether it's positive or negative, sitting around a table with family or being beaten before a Caesar, they're all opportunities for us to do the work the Master gave us to do. To tell people about Jesus. And no matter the situation, Jesus stands with us. His power and His provision and His grace and His word are with us.

So the question is: Where do you stand with Jesus today? Not in the sense of am I backslidden or not. But in the sense of this chapter. That God has placed us in certain situations and relationships and circumstances and He's standing there with us. So where are we standing with God today?

My guess is that no one here is going to be martyred for their faith today. And I'm thankful for that. But, even though we're not enduring the kinds of struggles we see in Mark 13, doesn't mean that we don't have a work to do. All the more we need to watch for God and watch for what He's doing in our lives today. Because it's easier for us to miss it. So we've got to get our heads in the game. We've got to choose to think about the future and not about temporal things. There's an urgency to the Christian life but there's a danger we will miss it if we're too wrapped up in the material world. If we've lost hope in the coming of the Lord or if we just stop caring about people going to hell. We need to be awake. We need to be doing what we're supposed to be doing.

Watch and work. God is standing with you today. And today is your opportunity to be a part of what God wants to do in every nation, in every heart, all around the world.