

## THE GREAT TRIBULATION (Mk. 13:14-23)

Mk. 13:14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it [he] ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: <sup>15</sup> And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: <sup>16</sup> And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. <sup>17</sup> But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! <sup>18</sup> And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. <sup>19</sup> For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. <sup>20</sup> And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. <sup>21</sup> And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: <sup>22</sup> For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. <sup>23</sup> But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

In the opening verses of this chapter Jesus prophesied a continuous duration of conflict and war, out of which poverty, increasing instability and uncertainty would be exacerbated by escalating natural disasters. Also, the persecution of God's people would become more vigorous, but the promise to them was, Mk. 13:13 he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved [protected].

The passage we read in Mark 13:14-23 is paralleled in Matthew 24:15-22 and Luke 21:20-24 ... Mt. 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) <sup>16</sup> Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: <sup>17</sup> Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: <sup>18</sup> Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. <sup>19</sup> And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! <sup>20</sup> But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: <sup>21</sup> For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. <sup>22</sup> And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened ... Lk. 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. <sup>21</sup> Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it [i.e. Jerusalem] depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. <sup>22</sup> For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. <sup>23</sup> But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. <sup>24</sup> And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

It is a fair observation of the world in a downward spiral. The authority of governments has collapsed. World peace is elusive. Morals and ethics have been 'turned on their heads'. Confusion reigns ... and not wishing to be a prophet of doom, the prospects are not good!

When we come to Mk. 13:14-23 Jesus prophesies a specific period in the future, succinctly described by Mark as 'days of affliction', <sup>19</sup> For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this

time, neither shall be. The suffering and anguish of these 'days of affliction' will be unprecedented. The preceding verses have already prophesied 'affliction', <sup>7</sup> wars and rumours of wars ... <sup>8</sup> ... nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ... earthquakes in divers places ... famines and troubles ... *However*, the affliction announced in v.19 is even *more* horrifying for it will exceed the atrocities of the Roman General Titus who flattened Jerusalem to the ground in 70 AD ... It will be more terrible than the affliction borne by God's people during the reign of Nero and some of the Roman Emperors ... The word for the 'affliction' (θλίψις) means 'to press hard', like *stamping on* the grapes in the winepress.

Luke refers to this same period and uses a similar term, **Lk. 21:23** *great distress in the land and wrath upon this people* ... It is very specific ... The 'land' is the land of Israel, and 'this people' is the people of the land of Israel, the Jews. The two words he uses for 'great distress' are μέγας and ἀνάγκη, - *mega-anarchy* ... unparalleled anarchy and disorder. ... Matthew calls it the *great tribulation* (Mt. 24:21), - and that is how we would know it best ... *the Great Tribulation*, and he uses the same two words as Mark, μέγας and θλίψις. ... Merge these descriptions and they describe a time of great distress and great tribulation ... an unimaginable chaotic, seemingly out-of-control, *affliction*.

During this concentration of evil, - with its continuous wars, threatening of wars, disasters on the earth and instability, - truth will have been exchanged for lies and falsehoods so-much-so people will accept anything, no matter how gross. This will precipitate a seemingly unending flow of false teachers and false prophets deceiving the people with their untruths ... but the scene is being prepared for something even *more* spectacular. ... We studied this period in Daniel's prophecy of the 'seventieth week'. It is tempting to revisit some of its aspects but, for the moment, we are dealing with this subject simply and briefly from Mk. 13, and its parallels in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. (If you wish, you can access the study on Daniel's Visions at <http://www.kirkcaldy-pathheadbaptist.co.uk/page114.html>.)

As we keep to the text in front of us, Mt. 24:15 and Mk. 13:15 speak about the 'abomination of desolation', - Luke also refers to it, **Lk. 21:20** *And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. .... Notice in Mk. 13:14 this is not for the disciples, but for readers at a later time, But when ye shall see [i.e. future tense] the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand). ...*

Here is what it means ... The *abomination of desolation* refers directly to Daniel's prophecy of a future temple and a future desecration of that temple, and Jesus is pointing the readers to look for what Daniel had described, 'The Abomination of Desolation', - something which will be so abhorrent in the house of God - ...

when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not. Daniel spoke about the ‘abomination’ three times, Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. It (βδέλυγμα) is a horrible word describing the most ‘detestable, filthy, absolutely revolting’. It is blasphemous, sacrilegious, and contemptible ... gross immorality, paganism, idolatry. This ‘abomination of desolation’ is totally offensive to God.

It is an act of blasphemy ... it is so offensive because it will take place in the temple. Let’s read from Daniel, **Dan. 9:27** *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week ...* The ‘he’ is the devil-inspired Antichrist who will come in what Daniel refers to as the ‘Seventieth Week’, he will make a covenant ‘with many’, that is, the people of Israel, in Jerusalem and throughout their land. There will be a restored temple, and in the midst of the *[final seventieth]* week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation *[offerings]* to cease *[in the temple] [he will put a stop to the worship]*, and for the overspreading *[extremity, unlimitedness]* of *abominations* he shall make it *desolate [he will extend the limits of depravity ... he will go to every lengths to abuse the Name of God]*, even until the consummation *[complete destruction]*, and that determined shall be poured upon the *desolate*. ...

He will introduce himself under the guise of bringing peace to Israel and the Middle East, - a peacemaker. He will make a name for himself all across the world for he will have solved the problem no-one else could. He will be a great man! In particular, though, Daniel says he will make a covenant with the Jews for seven years ... but in the middle of those seven years, he will break the covenant. ... The Jews had trusted him, and counted him as Messiah, but he will fool them for three-and-a-half years into the Seventieth Week the Antichrist will turn on them with vile and barbaric cruelty, the likes of which has never been experienced, - Jeremiah described it, **Jer. 30:7** *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.*

Again, we could explore this more deeply ... but we want to keep close to the words of Jesus on the Mount of Olives. He is quoting from Daniel’s prophecy describing the man who sets himself up and presents himself as God, as Paul describes, **II Thess. 2:3** *that man of sin ... the son of perdition; 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. ...* That’s what Satan, - Lucifer, the son of the morning, - tried to do in Heaven, and it is why he was cast out of Heaven for he said to himself, **Is. 14:13** *I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High ...* God threw him out ... and this is now the servant of the devil, the Antichrist, ruling from Jerusalem. ... This is what Jesus was teaching, and it will *therefore* be fulfilled.

There was an evil foreign king called Antiochus Epiphanes who ruled over the area which included Jerusalem and Israel. On 15<sup>th</sup> December [*Chislew*] 167 BC he entered the temple on his horse (which Judaism considers an unclean animal, Lev. 11:26), and he further desecrated the temple by sacrificing *pigs* (another unclean animal) on the altar. In Judaism, a pig is the most loathed animal ... they don't even use the word 'pig', instead, they call it 'another thing'. ... And Antiochus Epiphanes then placed an idol of Zeus *on the altar*. (Zeus is the god of the sky and thunder, the king over all other gods). Next, Antiochus massacred every Jew he could find! [*I Macc.1:54-64*] ... *That* is what is meant by an 'abomination of desolation', but Antiochus was in the past, and he was merely a 'proto-type' of the Antichrist. ... Could you imagine the Antichrist 'cosying up' to the Jews, and making great promises for their future? ... Could you imagine the Antichrist displaying himself as a great friend and boasting to be the 'saviour' of the Jewish people, standing up for them against their adversaries? ... And could you imagine the Antichrist drawing up an agreement with them and making great promises?! ... These will be interesting times!

Now, who is all this going to affect? Those whom it will particularly affect are the 'elect', Mk. 13:20 *And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved [protected]: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days ...* 22 ... false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even *the elect*. ... Who are the elect? The Bible is a Jewish Book, - its writers in the Old Testament were Jews, as were most of the writers in the New Testament. Therefore, the immediate application is to the Jews ... and, here, Jesus was speaking to His disciples who were Jews. In their Old Testament, the Lord refers to *them*, Is. 45:4 *For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee ...* Is. 65:9 *And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there ...* 22 *They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ...* The Jews.

So, the Jews will be at the forefront of horrific wickedness by this 'man of sin', this false 'Messiah', Rev. 13:5 *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months [3½ years ... 1260 days (each Jewish month had 30 days, 30 x 42 = 1260)].* 6 *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.* 7 *And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. God will not allow him to kill all the Jews, but he will kill two-thirds of them,* Zech. 13:8 *And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.* 9 *And I will bring the third part [the remnant] through the fire ...* Mk. 13:14 *let them that be in Judaea flee to the*

mountains: **15** And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: **16** And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. One-third *will* escape ... be saved/protected.

It is so cruel the Lord restricted the enemy's activity, **Mk. 13:20** except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. ... And in the midst of it all, the false *ψευδόχριστος*] Christs and the false prophets [*ψευδοπροφήτης*] will continue to propagate their false gospels, and they will be so convincing Jesus warns His people ... **Mk. 13:5** Take heed ... **9** take heed ... **23** take heed ... **33** take heed ...

If someone was to say to you, "Jesus has come back", don't believe it for God's Word says when He comes back, **Rev. 1:7** every eye shall see him ... and nobody will miss the sound announcing His arrival, **16** the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God ... and the dead will be lifted up out of their graves, **Dan. 12:2** And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

There is so much more we could study about God's next special date in His calendar, **Mk. 13:32** of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. ... The events preceding His Second Coming are a recurring theme in both the Old and the New Testaments. We are to read it and study it so we are ready. ... Keep watching the Middle East for God said through Zechariah, **Zech. 12:2** Behold, I will make Jerusalem *a cup of trembling* unto all the people ... **3** And in that day will I make Jerusalem *a burdensome stone* for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. ... *It's happening!*

How do we conclude our study? ... We finish by affirming the Word of God by "standing on the promises of Christ our King" ... Whose word has the final say, **Mk. 13:23** take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. ... Believer, keep your eyes open. Keep your mind focussed. Keep your heart prepared, and keep trusting and believing for the Lord Jesus Christ is *surely* coming soon! Amen.