



Mark 13:14-23 - A Great Tribulation and the Coming of the Son of Man

February 17, 2013

Text: Mark 13:19-31

As we said last week:

1. The Olivet Discourse (Mathew 24-25, Mark 13, etc.) has been used by many in an attempt to discredit our Lord.
2. The argument normally goes like this: "See, Jesus said all these things would happen with the generation He was talking to, and they didn't! He's a false prophet! Your Bible is wrong!"
3. But we have discovered that our Lord was as accurate as always. All that is required is a reading of the text...in context. Trying to interpret Scripture with a newspaper almost always results in guessing.
4. And let me make this clear: _____ matters. Ideas have consequences. People have literally rejected Christ and Christianity because of current teaching models concerning the verses we are reading in Mark 13 and Mathew 24.

Reading the Bible for all It's Worth

1. First, let us again understand that to understand Scripture, we must ask ourselves the right questions:
 - **Rule 1: A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers.**
 - This rule anchors us into the author's and hearer's **context**, and gives us a "foundation" from which to interpret and apply the passage we are reading.
 - **Rule 2: Whenever we share the same context with the original hearers, God's Word to us is the same as His Word to them.**
 - **Rule 3: The clear must interpret the unclear.**
2. Also helpful in this process is the understanding that the Bible is to be interpreted in its most natural and normal sense. In other words, to read the Bible literally is to read it as literature. Do you remember our C.L.I.G.H.T.S.?

A Useful Methodology: C.L.I.G.H.T.S.

- _____ - One of the greatest errors we can make is to take a text out of its intended context. It has been said that "a text without a context is a pretext", which is an incorrect assumption or interpretation. We are commanded to be diligent in Bible study (2 Tim 2:15), and to test ALL things in light of Scripture (1 Thes 5:21). This requires proper interpretative methods. Taking a text out of its context can result in false doctrine, poor decisions, and leaving the will of God!
- _____ Principle - This means that we should interpret the Word of God in its most natural and normal sense, taking into account obvious metaphors and figures of speech. We must be careful not to over-spiritualize passages and therefore compromise the meaning. Also, let me add this very important point: there is a difference between didactic (teaching) passages and narrative passages. They both are different from poems and prophetic passages with apocalyptic imagery. Interpreting a Scripture in light of the literary genre in which it is placed helps us arrive at the truth of its application.
- _____ - A true understanding of Scripture can only come from the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, the author of the Bible (1 Cor 2:12; 1 Jn 2:27). It is helpful to ask Him to

help you understand the Word in truth as you study. This does not mean that we listen to "inner voices" while we study; it means we trust Him to guide us.

- _____ Principle - This principle means that we seek to have a "basic" understanding of the original languages to help avoid mistakes and in order to dig deeper into the text (Mk 12:44).
 - _____ Principle - Having knowledge about the customs and cultural themes of the day can also help us to avoid mistakes in learning Scripture and while applying them to today. But care must also be taken here to not throw out tough passages where God may be requiring obedience regardless of cultural norms by saying, "that was for then not now." Our interpretive rules really help us here.
 - _____ Principle - Typology is the idea that people, places, things, and events of the Bible are really just types or shadows of bigger spiritual truths. All the types of the Old Testament find their culmination in Jesus Christ. This one truth really helps us when teaching in the Old Testament.
 - Scriptural _____ - This means that individual passages of Scripture must always harmonize with Scripture as a whole. One text can never be interpreted in a way as to conflict with another passage. The Bible never contradicts itself! Some examples include comparing OT passages concerning forgiveness of sin, ceremonial issues (food, cleansing, etc.), and civil matters with the NT. They appear contradictory if one doesn't understand that those commands were fulfilled in Christ.
3. Let's zero in on the Literal Principle. Again, to read the Bible literally is to understand the literary genre of the passage you are reading. The Bible has in it all the various forms of literature:
 - a. Historical narratives
 - b. Poetry and Psalms (songs!)
 - c. Proverbs
 - d. Didactic epistles (teaching or commanding verses)
 - e. Apocalyptic revelations and fantasy imagery
 - f. And more!
 4. God also used people to write the Bible (2 Pet 1:20-21), and through them, used normal language patterns:
 - a. Metaphor (an implied comparison), simile (this is like that), hyperbole (a very exaggerated statement to stress the severity of a point), etc. In other words, they spoke just like we speak.
 - b. Normally it is so easy to tell which is which we don't give it a second thought.
 - c. For example, when Jesus says "I am the door," we know He isn't saying He's made of wood and hinges! And when He says, "I am the bread of life" we know we can't put ham and mustard on Him! ☺
 5. This may all seem funny, but it is critical to understand...

A Great Tribulation (verses 19-24)

1. By now, it's obvious that the Lord's "in context" description of the Tribulation would be the crushing nightmare of the Jerusalem siege and the Temple's destruction in 70AD.
 - a. Again, it is NOT my goal to draw a hard line against a dispensational (Left Behind books/movies) view. My goal is to establish the _____ and the truth of Scripture as it is without making assumptions and reading into the text (eisegesis).

2. It was going to be so bad, the Lord used a bit of hyperbole in verses 19-20, and prophetic apocalyptic imagery in verse 24...
 - a. There are many passages of Scripture where the prophets do the same; they use the “never before never again” language to communicate _____. If we don’t get this, Scripture collapses into contradiction after contradiction....
 - b. *Eze 5:8-9 ESV* therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. (9) And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again.
 - c. *Joe 2:1-2 ESV* Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, (2) a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.
 - d. As another example, Noah’s flood wiped out all of humanity except those in the Ark. Jesus wasn’t saying this Tribulation would be worse than that. He was communicating severity in the manner of the prophets.
3. Similarly, let’s look at the Judgment metaphors:
 - a. *Mar 13:24-27 ESV* "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, (25) and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. (26) And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. (27) And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.
 - b. The Lord used the same type of prophetic hyperbole used over and over again by the prophets to communicate coming _____ and _____...
 - c. *Jer 4:13-14 ESV* Behold, **he comes up like clouds**; his chariots like the whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles-- woe to us, for we are ruined! (14) O Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil, that you may be saved. How long shall your wicked thoughts lodge within you?
 - d. *Eze 30:1-4 ESV* The word of the LORD came to me: (2) "Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: "Wail, 'Alas for the day!' (3) For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; **it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.** (4) A sword shall come upon Egypt, and anguish shall be in Cush, when the slain fall in Egypt, and her wealth is carried away, and her foundations are torn down.
 - e. *Zep 1:14-15 ESV* The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. (15) A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, **a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,**
 - f. *Isa 13:9-10 ESV* Behold, **the day of the LORD comes**, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. (10) For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.
 - g. An oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, **the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt**; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them. 2 And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight, each against another and each against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom; 3 and the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their counsel; and they will inquire of the idols and the sorcerers, and the mediums and the

necromancers; 4 and I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master, and a fierce king will rule over them, declares the Lord GOD of hosts. (Isa 19:1-4)

- h. *I saw in the night visions, and behold, **with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Dan 7:13-14)*
4. So when the Lord mentions the Great Tribulation and how bad it would be; and when the Lord says the sun will be darkened, stars will fall, and they will “see” the Son of Man coming in the clouds, that stars would literally fall from the sky! He was communicating (like the prophets) that Jerusalem would be _____.
 - a. The context hasn’t changed or shifted to 2000 years later. Remember...
 - b. “I have told YOU....” (v23)
 5. When the prophets prophesied about impending destruction, they did so using language that made a _____ point. God was “coming” to punish the nations in a devastating manner.
 6. And in the times of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, He did so! The “day of the lord” came to both Judah and Israel...in the form of the Babylonian and Assyrian captivities, thousands if not millions dead or captured and enslaved.
 7. Not every prophecy has been fulfilled yet, but many have. The Bible is the only document in existence that provides over 2,000 fulfilled prophecies to validate its claims. Other so called prophetic books have been proven to be false, whereas the Bible has been 100% accurate. There are some 500 prophecies that are yet to come to pass, and we await them as we await the return of our Lord!

(Notes: For our thoughts on verses 21-22 (false Christ’s), see the Feb 3 message.)

THE time text of all time texts....

1. *Mar 13:28-31 ESV "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, **you** know that summer is near. (29) So also, when **you** see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. (30) Truly, I say to **you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.** (31) Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*
 - This is the verse that gets our Lord branded a false prophet.
 - It wasn’t His words; it is that He told the time His words would happen!
 - The word generation is *genea* in Greek. It simply means (as is clear by the context), “the whole multitude of men living at the same time.”
2. Jesus DID “Come” in His Kingdom!
 - a. Not only did many in the time of our text live to see His death, burial, and resurrection...plus the birth of His church...BUT...
 - b. In 70 AD, in the fulfillment of divine judgment, the Lord did exactly what He did to Judah and Jerusalem in the Old Testament. Using Rome as His tool (as He did with Assyria and Babylon), He “came in the clouds,” destroyed Jerusalem and obliterated the temple, the ruins of which still exist today.
 - c. Many of those who killed him (around 33 AD) were still alive, and surely they remembered His words. So in a generation, many did not “taste death” (Matt 16:28) until the Lord fulfilled His promise!
 - d. *Rev 1:7 - Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.*

- e. The Pharisees, who studied the OT day and night, would surely have known that by saying He was coming in the clouds (or coming in His kingdom), Jesus was claiming again to be God, and He was and is!
3. Yes, He is coming again in a _____ judgment (The Second Coming, Rev 19-22), but make no mistake...our Lord did not prophesy falsely.
 - a. **He “came” Old Testament style and destroyed Jerusalem...in power and great glory. And He will come again, this time bodily, and do the same to this world. (Rev 19-22)**

Some closing thoughts on Dispensational Theology...

1. One more time let me say that we are friends of dispensationalists. Christians’ end times views are NOT reasons to divide!
2. The Dispensational view is based on 2 assumptions:
 - a. That Israel and the Church are distinct and have distinct plans. In other words, God has two peoples instead of just one and He deals with them separately.
 - b. That the book of Revelation was written in 95AD (which would mean its events are yet ahead) instead of before 70AD like the rest of Scripture.
3. Admittedly, I only see one people in Scripture, a people based on faith in Christ instead of race...
 - a. *Gal 3:28-29 ESV* **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.**
4. And admittedly, I think the book of Revelation was written by John prior to 70AD because of what the letter itself says and doesn't say....
 - a. In an apocalyptic letter, John doesn't mention the most terrible event in Jewish history at that time, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
 - b. In not doing so, John doesn't mention the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy either!
 - c. John writes as if the temple is still standing: *“Rev 11:1-2 ESV* **Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, (2) but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.”**
5. Having said all that, if you are a committed dispensationalist, we are ok! We can have fun debates, but never divide. The church should still be....
 - a. Committed to the safety of Israel, like we would be to any other Nation...
 - b. Preaching the Gospel of Christ to ALL people, for there is only ONE name under heaven....
 - c. Looking forward to the Rapture. Regardless of when you think it will happen, it will happen! To encourage churches facing a Roman Beast in the fore-future, John writes of the final future....

Rev 22:1-5 ESV **Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (2) through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (3) No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. (4) They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (5) And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.**

Amen.