

末世的征兆（下）：一个预先给出的指示——马可福音 13:14-23

Signs of the End Times (Part 3)—An Instruction Beforehand—Mark 13:14-23

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture Reading: Mark 13:14-23 2 Thessalonian 2:1-12 1 John 2:18-25

Mark 13:14-23(NASB1995)

14 “But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 15 The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; 16 and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. 17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 But pray that it may not happen in the winter. 19 For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. 20 Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. 21 And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, He is there’; do not believe him; 22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

- As with Jesus' entire sermon on the Mount of Olives (Mark 13:5-37), this passage contains both universal principles throughout history and specific end-time events of the future. The future event in this passage is the large-scale, cruel persecution that the Antichrist will launch against God's people in the middle point of the seven-year Great Tribulation
- Title: Signs of the End Times (Part 3)—An Instruction Beforehand—Mark 13:14-23
 1. The Signal of the Antichrist’s Coming (v14a)
 2. The Sensible Reaction of God’s People (vv. 14b-18)
 3. The Severity of the Great Tribulation (v19)
 4. The Safe Protection of God’s People (vv.20-23)

The Signal of the Antichrist’s Coming (v14a)

- “the abomination of desolation”: A key figure in the end times. His name consists of two words—“Abomination” refers to his morally corrupt and detestable character; “destruction” refers to the consequence he brings upon others. He causes destruction to others by his moral corruption, hence his name.

【Full exegesis】 The Book of Daniel mentions this character three times:

The first time (9:27) is in the prophecy about the seventy sevens, where it says the abomination of desolation will “make a firm covenant with the many” in the last seven years, that is, he will establish an international military alliance through some form of covenant.

The second time “the abomination of desolation” is mentioned (11:31), it refers to an idol. Historically, it was set up in the temple by the king of the North (11:21-35, Antiochus Epiphanes, 2nd century BC),

desecrating God's sanctuary. It also prefigures the future Antichrist's blasphemy against God (11:36-45).

The third time "the abomination of desolation" (12:11) points directly to the end times, referring to the destruction that will occur three and a half years before the final, perfect ending.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 'Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the **son of destruction**, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.'

The Sensible Reaction of God's People (vv. 14b-18)

- 'Let the reader understand': This indicates that Jesus is not giving instructions to his disciples at that time, but rather through the disciples to future readers of this scripture. In the future, during the Great Tribulation, God will still be using the Bible to guide the lives of believers.
【Insight】 **The Power of God's Word.** When the Great Tribulation begins, there won't be a single Christian left in the world, as the entire church will have been raptured (1 Thessalonians 4:17). God won't leave behind a single believer or pastor for those in the Great Tribulation, but He will leave His Word. God will still use His Word to cause some sinners to be born again and be saved, and to guide them to live a life of worshiping God.
- "Flee to the mountains... do not go down... do not go back to get your clothes": This threefold command emphasizes how urgent and critical the situation will be at that time. There will be no time to go home and pack. The persecution by the Antichrist will be like a raging fire—he will sit in the temple declaring himself to be God, demanding everyone to worship him, and those who don't worship him will face certain death. Any normal believer would choose to flee as quickly as possible; this is the only rational choice.
【Attitude and Purpose】 The ultimate goal of fleeing is certainly not just to save one's own life. As with all things believers do, the ultimate goal is always to glorify God. But in such circumstances, the way to glorify God is to flee from danger and seek more opportunities to serve God on earth.
【Analogy】 Similar urgent flights have precedents in the Bible. When the Israelites left Egypt, the situation was so urgent that they had to eat unleavened bread (cf. Exodus 12:39). In Acts 8:1, disciples fled due to persecution, spreading the gospel wherever they went (Acts 8:4). Throughout church history, there are numerous examples of faithful believers fleeing persecution. For instance, in American founding history, the passengers on the Mayflower were all Puritans fleeing persecution from the English government.
【Principle】 Sometimes, Christians do need to use the "shrewd as serpents" kind of wisdom to serve God.
【Application Example】 Even in our environment of relative religious freedom, some may still face persecution at work, being prohibited from attending Sunday worship or fellowship activities. Some choose firmly to quit the job that hinders their worship life, which is also a form of God-pleasing flight.
- "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that it may not happen in the winter." This emphasizes the severity of persecution during the Great Tribulation. Any encumbrance that hinders escape will be life-threatening.

The Severity of the Great Tribulation (v19)

- "For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will." The persecution during the Great Tribulation will surpass all persecutions in history—Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, Bloody Mary, even surpassing the Nazi Holocaust of Jews during World War II last century. Moreover, Jesus is not only referring to religious persecution here, but all disasters during the Great Tribulation, including the earthquakes, famines, and plagues mentioned in verse 8, which will all reach unprecedented levels of severity.

【Reflection】 Why would a good God allow such things to happen? Because God wants us to see His wrath against sin! The most important message of the Great Tribulation is God's wrath against sin. The successive rounds of judgments in Revelation are all God's wrath, and the final seven bowl judgments are each filled with the fierce wrath of the living God against sin.

【Application】 Abhor your own sin from the heart! Believers must strive to put to death their sin, including all hidden sinful desires in the depths of their hearts, because these are very things that provoke God's wrath.

Colossians 3:5-6 "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. **For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.**"

The Safe Protection of God's People (vv.20-23)

- "Unless the Lord had shortened those days...": The shortening of days can be interpreted in two ways—either it means Jesus will return as soon as the seven years are up to stop the Antichrist from continuing to harm people; or it could mean that the Lord will miraculously shorten the daylight hours to give His fleeing people more cover of nighttime darkness.

【Key Point】 Even in the unprecedented Great Tribulation judgment, God still has sufficient grace for His people. To prevent His elect from being completely destroyed, God may even alter the days to alleviate the suffering of the elect.

【Clarification】 The word "saved" here refers to physical salvation, not spiritual salvation. Once the souls of the elect are saved, they will never lose their salvation; even if external persecution is severe and prolonged, true believers cannot lose their faith and salvation. Yet God will still save by His grace the physical lives of some faithful believers at that time.

【Purpose】 Perhaps it's purely to manifest God's great grace. Perhaps there will still be people waiting for their testimony to repent and believe in the Lord to be saved. In any case, what we see here is God's great, unfathomable grace and mercy.

- "Then if anyone says to you...": Times of disaster are Satan's great opportunity to deceive people. The more difficult the circumstance, the easier it is to get people duped into believing anyone who promises to save them from tribulation.

【Analogy】 The prevalence of prosperity theology in Africa today is partly due to economic poverty, where people become more easily deceived.

- "For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders": Satan's imitation of God will be highly deceptive. Revelation 13:3 says the Antichrist will even have a fatal wound that was healed, almost identical to Christ.

【Application】 Remember this verse for evangelism. When someone starts to talk about strange things like a fortune teller giving particularly accurate predictions... Show them this verse and tell them Jesus has long prophesied such things!

- "in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect": The implication is that this is **impossible**, for God will supernaturally protect them.

【Principle】 No matter how severe the tribulation and persecution, or how cunning Satan's schemes, true believers will not be fundamentally deceived into following false christs. All tactics are ineffective against them because they are **personally chosen by God**, they are **God's elect**.

John 15:16 "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

Ephesians 1:4 "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."

"The doctrine of election crushes human pride, exalts God, produces joy and gratitude to the Lord, grants eternal privileges and assurance, promotes holiness, and makes one bold and courageous, for one who has been chosen by God for eternal life has no need to fear anything or anyone." — One pastor

- "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance." At that time, the elect who read this scripture will act according to what Jesus has said in advance, maintaining high spiritual alertness. They will not compromise with the Antichrist because they know that those who endure to the end will be saved, and they know that if they persevere just a little longer, Jesus will return and end all this suffering.

Summary Application

When we see the danger that's coming upon our unbelieving family and friends, and the wonderful protection of the elect in Jesus, **how can we not be motivated to be more fervent in our evangelistic effort?**