

1. **Introduction:** In His teaching discourse on the Mount of Olives, Jesus continues with comments on future disastrous events.
2. **Mark 13:14-18:** *“But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup> Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, <sup>16</sup> and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. <sup>17</sup> And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! <sup>18</sup> Pray that it may not happen in winter.”*
  - An abomination is “something that causes disgust or hatred.” A desolation is “a state of complete emptiness or destruction.”
  - “These things”* (13:4) relating to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD is a type of events in *“those days”* (13:17) relating to End Times.
  - “The abomination of desolation” triggers a specific disaster.
  - 2 Thessalonians 2 seems to be a parallel description of this prediction.
  - As with many prophetic utterances, this enigmatic one may have “near” and “far” term realizations. In End Times, Jesus foresees a powerful opponent arising, an Antichrist, who brings terrible tribulation to believers. That tribulation will end in the return of the Lord.
3. **“Abomination of desolation”:** This term appears to allude to deliberate desecration of holy things by something or someone that leads to emptiness and destruction. Daniel prophesied such events.
  - The first fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy occurred in 167 BC. Antiochus erected a statue of the Greek god Zeus in the Jerusalem temple.
  - Antiochus ordered that swine, biblically unclean animals, be offered on the temple altar, desecrating the holy place.
  - Daniel’s prophecy was fulfilled a second time in 70 AD when Roman armies under Titus desecrated and destroyed the temple.
  - Jesus’ discussion about the “abomination of desolation” is embedded in His talk about End Times. Thus, there will be a third fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy to occur in the future connected with End Times.
  - From the parallel treatment by Paul in 2 Thessalonians, the 3<sup>rd</sup> fulfillment will be related to the advent of the Antichrist and the final tribulation before the return of Christ.
  - We all tend to want a “foolproof” date for the end. The disciples asked for a sign (meaning a clear indication) of when these things would occur.
  - But Jesus said no one knows the time except the Father. There is no path to accurately predicting the precise time of Christ’s return.
  - Certain knowledge would mean we wouldn’t live in expectancy that Christ’s return might be today or tomorrow. We are to stand fast and be on guard!

- The Roman army approaching Jerusalem in 70 AD was a warning to flee coming disaster.
  - Many believers did flee. But many Jews entered the city to celebrate the Passover expecting to be safe. The Romans let them enter but then surrounded the city and let no one leave.
  - Extra people in the city used up food supplies fast, causing starvation for many. Having many non-combatants within the city walls produced other problems. In total, about one million Jews were killed in the war.
  - Likewise, signs of the impending disaster before the Tribulation may be ignored. Will people understand and flee to the safety of Christ?
4. **Final Tribulation, Mark 13:19:** *“For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.”*
- Since creation, there have been many times of great tribulation (think of the Flood), but the tribulation of End Times will be such as has not been seen from the beginning till then.
5. **Mark 13:20-23:** *“And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. <sup>21</sup> And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. <sup>22</sup> For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. <sup>23</sup> But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.”*
- “Those days” refers to ultimate and final reckoning at the end of the age.
  - The situation depicted has no parallel in human history.
  - No human would have survived the full end-time tribulation, but, for the sake of the elect, God intervened with grace and mercy.
  - Whatever the cataclysm, it clearly exceeds in horror any known event in history. Dreadful as the killing and destruction was in Jerusalem, it was only a type of the End Time events.
  - In some manner, God will spare the elect.
6. **False Christs:** In 13:5-8 Jesus gave warning about messianic pretenders who would come after His death but before the destruction of the Temple.
- False Christs warned about in 13:21-23 signal that the end is at hand (2 Thess. 2:2-4).
  - False Christs will perform signs and wonders to gain a following. The signs and wonders will be believed, leading many astray. But, tragically, the message of Christ has not been believed (8:14-32).
  - We have been forewarned by Jesus, so **“Be on guard.”** Pay attention, both to the warning and to the protection offered through the gospel.
  - Even the faithful cannot foretell the future, but they have been warned.
  - The task of the faithful is watchfulness and obedience during their life.
  - When Christ returns, He will fulfill the abundance of OT prophesies about the End.
  - When the end comes, everyone will know. Until the end comes, no one can establish the specifics of when or how the end will come.
  - Jesus continues to talk about End Times and His coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

7. **Mark 13:24-27:** *“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup> and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. <sup>26</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> 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.”*
- Following the distress of tribulation, there will be a great cosmic upheaval disturbing the universe and shaking the powers in heaven. Darkness and chaos will be everywhere.
  - Then will the Son of Man come in clouds with great power and glory, bringing justice, condemning evil, ending suffering, and gathering His own to Himself.
  - The Son of Man coming in clouds is from the vision of Daniel 7:13.
  - In the OT “clouds” often are symbols of the presence and glory of God.
  - Here it seems to signify that God present in the clouds in the Temple is now present in Jesus coming in the clouds.
  - The OT often tells of exiles and captives being gathered to Jerusalem on the Day of the Lord. Here, they are gathered from everywhere to Jesus.
  - Elect are gathered *“from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.”*
  - Though scattered by death and history, the elect come together in Christ.
8. **Mark 13:28-31:** *“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. <sup>29</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”*
- As indicated by the *“these things”* phrase of 13:29-30, this portion of the discourse returns to the subject of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. “These things” are different from the end time events of “those things” of 13:17.
  - Notice, verses 24-27 are not signs of the end, but a description of the end.
  - In Israel, fig trees lose leaves in winter. In late spring warm weather, the branches of the fig tree grow tender with buds. In this way the fig tree signals the nearness of summer but not precisely the day it will come.
  - Likewise, as destruction of the Temple was signaled by the approaching Roman army, End-Times will be signaled by identifiable events but without a precise time signal.
  - What generation is it that will not pass away before *“all these things take place”*? If “these things” refer to the destruction of the Temple, it is the generation of Jesus (a generation in Scripture is usually about 40 years).
  - Whatever is being destroyed, Jesus’ words will not pass away. *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”*
  - Jesus’ Words are eternal and will outlive the old earth and heavens.
9. **Mark 13:32:** *“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*

- ***“That day”*** and ***“that hour”*** refer to the time of Jesus return. While the disciples want a sign that points to a specific time, Jesus says no one knows, not even the Son in His human nature, but only the Father.
  - The disciples want to identify the specific time. Jesus, in His human nature, simply depends on the sovereign Father.
  - During utmost calamity and tribulation, God remains in sovereign control.
  - Jesus says, because you do not and cannot know specifically when the End Times will come, you must continually be on guard, staying alert and watching.
10. **Mark 13:33-37:** ***“Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.***  
<sup>34</sup> ***It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.*** <sup>35</sup> ***Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning -*** <sup>36</sup> ***lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.***  
<sup>37</sup> ***And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”***
- There are many forms of false identification of the time of Christ’s coming. False prophets will raise false hope and point to false signs that will bring anxiety and fear to people who listen.
  - It has been many years since Jesus said He will come again in power and glory. That is troublesome to many people.
  - That Christ has not yet come again causes some believers to fall into doubt and complacency, and non-believers to laugh at believers who expect Jesus to return at a time decreed by God.
  - Jesus twice says, ***“you do not know when.”*** Since we do not and cannot know “when,” we are to be constantly prepared for His return. ***“Be on guard, keep awake.”*** Watch and be alert. Be obedient.
  - Live faithfully in the here and now. Be attentive to signs. Be patient. Trust God. Interestingly, like the Romans, Mark includes four watches of the night. The Jews divided the night into three watches.
  - The disciples heard the admonition to always watch and be alert on Tuesday night. On Thursday night in Gethsemane Jesus reprimanded them 5 times for failure to watch. Hearing is much easier than obeying.
  - The last verse of the Olivet discourse is ***“And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”*** The NIV, NKJV, and other translations say, ***“And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.”***
  - To everyone ***“watch”!*** That is the admonition of the Spirit to all believers.
  - The timing of the End is unknown, but it is known that the End will come suddenly. Live in faithful readiness.
  - This completes Mark chapter 13.