

## Mark 13:5-13

### “Take heed no one deceives you”

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#### I. **Introduction**

Last week we began our study of the “Olivet Discourse”; we discussed the timing and occasion of this message as being in the final few days of Jesus’ earthly life. It came from a statement offered by His disciples after His continual rejection of first century Judaism. Jesus informed them that though the buildings were impressive there would be not one stone left upon another, that caused them to ask Him “**WHEN**” it would occur and “**WHAT**” would be the sign. The bulk of last Sunday’s message was outlining the entire passage so that we could take a look at the “Olivet Discourse” in greater detail while still viewing it in its entirety. We noted that Jesus bracketed His words on **WHEN**” the end of the world would occur and “**WHAT**” the sign would be with two “*Take heed*” warnings.

**Those warnings form the context of the information as to “when” and “what”. Mark’s emphasis is the twofold warning that Jesus issued to the church with regards to end times:**

- *That “signs” would be utilized by false messiahs to deceive the church.*
- *That a church too focused on “when” and “what” could fall into apathy when their assumptive guesses didn’t pan out.*

The “Olivet Discourse” breaks apart into four sections:

- 1. Vs. 6-13 **False Signs**
- 2. Vs. 14-23 **True Sign**

3. Vs. 24-27 **Climax of history**

4. Vs. 28-37 **Guarantees and warnings**

This morning our focus in detail will be upon those four non-signs.

## II. Vs. 6 **Proliferation of pretenders**

Vs. 5 I find it interesting that the delegation of four disciples wanted to know “when” and “what” but Jesus prefaces His answer with a warning and ends it with a warning. This suggests to me that the greater issue to address from Jesus’ perspective is not to satisfy the churches curiosity but warning His church of the dangers to that curiosity in the hand of our enemy. “*When*” and “*what*” were the wrong questions instead the church should be asking what we are to “*Watch out*” for! And since they didn’t ask Jesus goes on to list four events or “signs” that the enemy will use to deceive them.

Vs. 6 First there will be a ***proliferation of pretenders*** for the sole purpose to lead the church astray. The deception is not limited to those who claim to be the messiah but to those who would wrongly follow them. Jesus explains how they are successful at perpetuating this lie as they attract a following by basing their claims by the using Jesus’ name. They claim authority and power by saying that they are the same in person and work as Jesus. There were dozens of false messiahs prior to and after Jesus. In Acts chapter 5:36-39 we learn of two of them when the Jewish teacher of the law Gamaliel was advising the religious leaders who had arrested the apostles not to take action when he said, “*For some time ago **Theudas** rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man, **Judas of Galilee** rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for*

*if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God.”*

- **Theudas** claimed that he would part the Jordan river but instead led 400 of his followers to their deaths.
- **Judas the Galilean**, was an anti-Roman radical who founded the Zealot movement that Simon, one of Jesus disciples had been a part of.
- A 100 years after Jesus had risen from the dead **Simon Bar-Kochba** began a rebellion that lasted for over three years and cost 100’s of lives. He was proclaimed the messiah by Rabbi Akiva in Jerusalem and gained control of the Jewish population. He was convinced of his messianic calling and ruled the people with an iron fist. He demanded that all Christians deny Jesus as the Messiah and tortured or killed any men, women or children that didn’t. In the end the Romans put an end to him and his followers by killing 1,000’s and sending the rest into captivity or slavery.
- There was **Moses of Crete** who promised to part the Mediterranean Sea and lead his followers across to Jerusalem on dry ground. He gathered them on a high cliff and at his command they jumped only to be swallowed up by the Sea and drown.
- There was **Moses Al-Dar’I**, a Jewish Moroccan who predicted that the messiah was coming back at Passover in 1127 A.D. so all the people sold everything and met together watching the date come and go being left destitute.
- In the 1200’s Sicilian mystic **Abraham ben Samuel** proclaimed himself the messiah and led a failed attempt to resettle Jews in Israel.
- **Shabbetai Tsevi** of Smyrna came in 1666 and said he heard a voice from God claiming he was the messiah. He led his followers to Constantinople where he was arrested and the sultan told him to prove it or he would die and he responded by converting to Islam.

This is just a small list of would-be messiahs who have come and gone through out history. We have had many in our time like Jim Jones and others who have deceived 100’s and thousands of their followers like Joseph Smith. Many of them were very convincing and charismatic people who made amazing claims. But just like Jesus predicted their claims are all false and what they taught is not what Jesus taught. They have been successful in leading many astray, all because their followers preferred to listen to their lies instead of following the warnings of Jesus when He said “*Take heed*

*that no deceives you.*” But remember dear ones that the ***proliferation of pretenders*** is not a sign that the end is near as I have shown you this has been going on sense before Jesus.

### III. Vs. 7-8a Permanent political problems

Vs. 7-8a The second non-sign Jesus mentions is, ***Wars and rumors wars...nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*** The warning is to not to allow such things to “*trouble*” them. The word “*trouble*” is a word that means to be “*disturbed or terrified*”. There is little doubt that the disciples were “*troubled*” by their present condition of political unrest in their nation. ***History is ever in a state some where of permanent political unrest but these things must never unseat the believer if their task of speaking of the goodness and greatness of Jesus.*** There are two kingdoms at work in this world: The kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of the Son of His love. These two are moving along side by side and for the most part the world is unaware of the kingdom of God. Jesus’ warning is that we Christians should not be unaware of the kingdom of God no matter what the kingdom of this world is doing! No matter how dark the kingdom of this world gets it will never invade the Kingdom of God, it our privilege by works and words to invade the kingdom of this world. The depravity of the human race is the root of all wars, and it is this that makes ***nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,*** inevitable. With in a 100 years there were threats of wars or wars against the Jew’s from three Roman emperors, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. In A.D. 38 in Alexandria the Jew’s were special objects of persecution. In 115-117 AD at the second Judean-Roman war in modern day Iraq over 50,000 Jews were killed in the Kitos War or the war of the dispersion. There have been somewhere between 250,000 wars in human history, some have gotten to the category of “world war”. If you go back to the time during these horrible events, you will find well meaning Christian authors saying that

right after World War 1 that this was the sign of our Lord's return. Then again they said the same thing right after world war 2. They would write things like "*No other war in history fulfilled prophecy like this war.*" What they fail to recognize is that Jesus clearly states in verse 7 that, "***the end is not yet.***"

#### IV. Vs. 8b Cataclysmic catastrophes

Vs. 8b The third non-sign Jesus say's is ***There will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles:*** Josephus the ancient Jewish / Roman historian records the fact that between Jesus' prophecy which was around A.D. 30 to the destruction of Jerusalem 40 years later in A.D. 70 there was four major earthquakes: in Crete in A.D. 46, at Rome in A.D. 51, at Apamia in Phrygia (modern day Turkey) in A.D. 60, and at Campania which is in Italy near Pompeii in A.D. 63, (16 years later the eruption of Mount Vesuvius happened). In a ten-year span between 2004 and 2014 there were 18 earthquakes with a magnitude of 8.0 or more which is an increase 265% over the average rate over the last 100 years which saw 71 great earthquakes. Josephus also recorded in that same 40-year span after Jesus wrote these words that there were four famines one of which according to Acts chapter 11:28 was in Judaea in A.D. 44. In China from 108 B.C. to 1911 A.D. there were 1,828 major famines or about 1 every other year. There were 95 famines in Britain during the Middle ages. In 1996 in North Korea over 600,000 died of starvation. And Jesus says that such things are not the sign they are instead just intolerable pains and anguish. All such "troubles" are so horrible as to cause a person to think that the world is about to end and for believers to get caught up into that hoping so as we know that Jesus is coming back at the end. Yet Jesus says that these events are not the "SIGN".

V. **Vs. 9-13 Prolonged persecution**

Vs. 9-13 Fourth and finally Jesus says that, *They will deliver you up to councils... synagogues...rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. Brother will betray brother to death, father his child, and children will rise up against parents.*

Verse 9 is a historical transition from the early believers being all Jewish who have trusted in Jesus as messiah. They Jesus says, “*Will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues.*” The first form of persecution against the church was Jewish but as the church expanded beyond Jewish believers Jesus says that, “*You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.*” The book of Acts records this rapid spread of the gospel as it was preached to all the nations. Verse 10 as long been used to motivate evangelism and missions by suggesting that Jesus can not come back until “*the gospel must **FIRST** be preached to all the nations.*” The 14<sup>th</sup> verse introduces us to the beginning of the great tribulation and it will be just as Jesus said that the gospel will be preached by the 144,000 Jewish followers of Jesus and the two witnesses as well to all the nations just proceeding Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Human history from the time that Jesus spoke these words to now has been riddled with martyrs but the exhortation by Jesus is verse 11 and verse 13. Jesus isn’t saying that we earn our salvation as the word mentioned is not spiritual as no one is ever saved by enduring but rather it is a physical salvation as those during the tribulation period who have received the Lord and suffered persecution will enter the millennial period. No believer “earns” their salvation by enduring to the end; no, we prove that our salvation is genuine by the

fact that we endure persecution as every genuine Christian will survive the test. In every era we have seen professing Christians like the ones that the apostle John describes in 1 John 2:19 as those that, *“went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”* Christian history has seen this phenomenon countless times with people who have made a profession of faith and even seen to be growing in maturity only to have their commitment dissipate under the pressure of unpopularity and trials of the times. They didn’t endure and showed that in reality they were only intellectually committed not spiritually joined as they didn’t endure to the end.

Yet these four “signs” are not signs they have been happening since Jesus said these words. Next time I get with you will be looking specifically at what the “SIGN” of when the end of the world and the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus.