

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 13: 14-23

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to Mark chapter 13, verses 14 to 23.

When the disciples asked Jesus what signs there would be when all things would be fulfilled, the question was somewhat vague because "all things" included many stages of spreading the Gospel. In Acts 1:8, before Jesus ascended, He had already clearly revealed to the disciples the route of Gospel propagation: it was to start in Jerusalem, then spread throughout Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The disciples were to bear witness to Jesus Christ because the spreading of the Gospel would occur in several stages. Therefore, Jesus' answer also unfolded in several stages.

In the ninth verse we read yesterday, 'But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils.' This happened initially when the church was being established in Jerusalem, with Peter taking the lead; he had been delivered up to the councils. 'And you will be beaten in the synagogues.' This was the experience of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey when they went out on missions, initially visiting synagogues of the Jews in Gentile cities. In some places, they were beaten in the synagogues. 'And you will be brought before governors and kings for My sake.' This happened to Paul after his third missionary journey; he was arrested and brought before governors and kings of the Gentiles, where he testified to them. Then in the tenth verse, it says, 'And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations,' meaning that the gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth before the end comes.

At different times there will be different signs. But in the account of Mark's Gospel, it seems that these are all lumped together. We know that the Gospel of Mark was compiled by Mark based on Peter's testimony. Many scholars believe that it was

dictated by Peter and recorded by Mark. Peter was a brave, outspoken, action-oriented, and somewhat rough and ready person. Therefore, the account in Mark's Gospel retains Peter's style of action. It is sincere but somewhat rough, not paying much attention to details.

Peter himself was a Jew, a chosen people of the Old Testament, and he was also a disciple of Christ, thus he became a chosen people of the New Testament as well. In Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter, inspired by God the Father, answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus was very pleased with this response and said to Peter, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18). Then Jesus promised, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

Peter received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which essentially symbolize the Gospel. He opened the door of the Gospel to the Jews, quite straightforwardly. Just after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he stood up and preached a sermon, and immediately 3,000 Jewish men believed and were baptized, thus the Jerusalem church was established. However, opening the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles was not as easy for Peter. While staying at the house of Simon the tanner in Joppa, God had to show him a vision of a large sheet containing all kinds of animals. God instructed him to rise, kill, and eat. Peter replied, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean" (Acts 10:14). God said to him, "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 10:15). In Jewish understanding, Gentiles were considered unclean. Therefore, Peter hesitated to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. But through this vision, Peter reluctantly agreed.

Later, at the house of Cornelius, the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles was also opened. Once the work among the Gentiles began, the center of the book of Acts shifted from Peter to Paul. Initially, Peter seemed to struggle to keep up with the leading of the Holy Spirit, but by the time he wrote the Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter in his later years, he had completely transcended these limitations. Therefore, in his

description of the Discourse on Mount Olives to Mark, he seemed deliberate in no longer distinguishing between Jews and Gentiles. He used the simple term "chosen people" to encompass God's chosen people, and he did not emphasize distinctions between the Jews and the Church in the fulfillment of prophecies. Instead, he emphasized the need for caution and vigilance within individuals to avoid falling into doubt.

Verse 14: "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand)," This verse is very rich, and it is taken from Daniel 11:31. This verse has had many different fulfillments. At the time it was written in the Book of Daniel, it referred to the Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who in 168 BC erected a pagan altar in the temple. By the time of Jesus, this prophecy had already been fulfilled. However, Jesus, using the same verse, added the phrase "let the reader understand." The Bible, especially Old Testament prophecies, often has multiple layers of fulfillment.

The first fulfillment of this prophecy occurred around 168 BC, before the time of Jesus. However, Jesus used this verse to forewarn His disciples that a similar event would occur again around AD 70. This was something that some of Jesus' disciples would witness firsthand. But at the same time, Jesus also used this verse to foreshadow that in the last days of this age, during the final three and a half years of the great tribulation at the end of the world, there would be a resurgence of blasphemy against God. Therefore, Mark added the phrase "let the reader understand." So, what should one do when this happens?

Verse 15-16: "Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes."

When faced with such situations, Jesus instructs that our response should be to flee. Those in Judea should flee to the mountains, those on the housetop should not come down or enter the house to take anything out, but should flee immediately; those in the field should not return home to get their clothes. When encountering such extraordinary events, the Lord does not instruct us to resist but rather to flee quickly. Those in the city should flee to the mountains, those on the housetop do not need to return home to retrieve their belongings, and those in the field or at work do not need to go back home to get their clothes because it is an emergency situation, and the priority is to flee.

There are some things we can handle and overcome, but there are many situations permitted by God's will where we are utterly powerless. In such circumstances, Jesus teaches his disciples to flee swiftly.

Verse 17: "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!"

Through saying "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!" why is that? Because they will find it difficult to flee, and even if they do, they may not flee quickly. When you have various concerns, it's not easy to simply drop everything and leave.

Verse 18: "And pray that your flight may not be in winter."

Because in winter, with snow and cold, it's not easy to flee.

Verse 19: "For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be."

So, Jesus' statement here directly points to the end of the world, the great tribulation of the final three and a half years. Because such a tribulation has never occurred since the beginning of the world, nor will it ever happen again. Therefore, Jesus clearly tells us that this refers to the calamity that will come upon everyone at the end of the world.

Verse 20: "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days."

In the great tribulation at the end of the world, the calamity is so severe that almost no one with flesh and blood could endure it. But for the sake of His grace and mercy, Jesus shortened those days. And He did so for the sake of His elect, whom He chose. In other words, if there were not still Christians remaining at that time, the calamity would be even greater and heavier. At the end of this age, the Lord's elect will still present, and for the sake of His elect, the Lord shortened the days of the great tribulation.

There are two interpretations of the Lord's elect. Of course, the first refers to the Jews. According to the teaching in Romans 11, at the end of the world, the remaining Jews will be saved as a whole family, and for the sake of these Jews, God shortened the days of the calamity. Another interpretation includes Christians as well. This depends on your interpretation of the end-time events: whether believers will be raptured before, during, or after the tribulation. As for these details, perhaps we don't need to insist on a particular interpretation at the moment because the focus of Jesus Christ is not there. His focus is on...

Verse 21-22: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it." "For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

So here again, Jesus emphasizes the importance of truly knowing Christ. Because there will be people who will arise and say, "Look, Jesus is here," or "Look, He is there." And these false Christs and false prophets, they too can arise, they too can perform various signs and wonders. Because of their great power, they can perform miracles and signs, and thus often deceive even the elect.

This time, Jesus tells us again that when we follow Jesus Christ, we must truly know Him in our revelation, in our lives. This kind of knowledge is subjective, it is profound; we should not follow based on external signs and wonders. Even when Jesus was on earth fulfilling His ministry, He performed many miracles and wonders, healed many sick people, and cast out many demons. However, ultimately, those who were healed and delivered still crucified Jesus Christ. Therefore, miracles and wonders may not necessarily help you. And in the end times, miracles and wonders become a temptation, because they display supernatural power, and thus many of the elect are deceived.

A person who truly knows God not only understands His actions, which include many supernatural miracles and wonders that ordinary people cannot perform and only God can accomplish. However, merely recognizing God's actions does not guarantee that you can follow God appropriately because many false Christs and false prophets arise who can also perform miracles and wonders. Therefore, you not only need to understand God's actions but also His principles.

What principles does God operate on? You need to not only recognize God's principles but also come to know God Himself. Through daily reading of the Scriptures and prayer, having personal communication with God, you become familiar with the way God leads and speaks to you. In this way, you can truly know God and be protected from the deception of false Christs and false prophets.

Therefore, while we still have time, we should devote ourselves to reading God's Word diligently. From God's Word, we not only understand His actions and principles but also experience His presence. Through knowing His presence, we can understand God Himself, His guidance for us, and His will for us. Therefore, Jesus concludes after speaking about this matter.

Verse 23: "But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand."

Jesus tells us through the Scriptures. In Hebrews 1:1-2, it says, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." Not only is the Bible filled with prophecies about Jesus Christ, but in these last days, God speaks to us personally through His Son, enabling us to truly know Jesus Christ. Thus, we are less likely to be deceived by various things, including signs and wonders.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us to learn to know You, Your actions, Your principles, and Your very self before various trials come upon us. Help us to have communion with You in every aspect of our daily lives, learning how You lead us each day. When we encounter trials, enable us to truly follow You without being deceived. Help us to live this day in holiness, pleasing to You. We pray in Jesus Christ's holy name! Amen!