

Commentary on Mark 13:14-27

By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, February 27 , 2011**, is from **Mark 13:14-27**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary*. The **International Bible Lessons** can be read at <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>.

Mark 13:14-27

14 “But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains;

The Temple in Jerusalem was desecrated and then destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. The second Temple was desecrated and destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., about 40 years after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. A desolating sacrilege will occur again in Judea before Jesus returns. We are not told much about this event, but believers will recognize it when it happens and they are told to flee from Judea when they see it.

15 the one on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away;

When this sacrilege takes place, the natural human response may be to fight; however, the situation will be so dire and devastating that the survivor should not even take the time to collect any valuables to take with them when they flee. The most valuable possession is one's life, and that is all that can be saved at this time. This is one reason believers want others, especially those in their own family, to come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The time will be so devastating and happen so quickly that only those who are saved will be saved, unless they have the time to flee to the Savior, but it may be too late.

16 the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat.

The devastating sacrilege may be so sudden that a person cannot run back to their home even for a coat. For example, if a city were suddenly being heavily and constantly bombed, a person would be foolish to try to reenter the city or their home to save something valuable to provide comfort. A person needs to be prepared even in the field, and know what he would do if he cannot return home.

17 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!

God is not the one who is performing this sacrilege, but the sacrilege will be punished. As punishment for their sins and for their sacrilegious behavior the Jews were punished by God when He sent the Babylonians to burn their palaces,

the Temple, and to break down the walls of Jerusalem. These were horrible times for those who were pregnant and for those who were nursing infants. In time of devastating war, those who need special care will suffer from its lack and their need to flee an invading army in spite of their afflictions. In such situations, God, God's people, and our preparedness may be all we have to help us and others.

18 Pray that it may not be in winter.

Our prayers may make a difference with respect to our preparedness and the time of the desolating sacrilege. In ancient times, kings went off to war in summer more often than winter; this may be one of the thoughts contained in this verse. In this time of devastation or possible war, Jesus encourages believers to pray and ask God that the time of suffering will not happen in winter. The desolating sacrilege will happen, but our prayers may have some influence in the timing. Throughout history, we know how much suffering is increased for everyone during a war in winter, especially when soldiers and civilians are without coats.

19 For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be.

This time of suffering will be so great that there is no human solution. God must intervene to ease the suffering and stop the devastation. In all of past human suffering, there will never have been a time of suffering as great as this time, when God's enemies commit the devastating sacrilege. After God intervenes in this situation, such suffering will never occur again.

20 And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days.

God does not say that He will save us from suffering. He does tell us to be prepared and flee if necessary. He does promise to cut the days short. He will bring the time of suffering to a good end. The good news for believers is the knowledge that these days of suffering will be shortened by God's intervention, and we can pray for the days to be shortened whenever there is suffering of any kind. God's chosen people, some of them at least, will survive physically the devastation. All true believers will survive spiritually, because they have the gift of eternal life given to them by Jesus.

21 And if anyone says to you at that time, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'Look! There he is!' — do not believe it.

Even today, and for many years in the past, different people have claimed to be the Messiah – even the second coming of Jesus Christ. Some have looked upon various political leaders as the (or “a”) Messiah who would save them in the human or political sphere (it was this way in Jesus' day). Anyone in the mere

human realm, especially someone great or popular, might claim to be the Messiah, but they should not be mistaken as such.

22 False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

Jesus said that we should expect false messiahs and false prophets. The false prophets may point to the false messiahs coming. Or, as in the Old Testament, they may prophesy “peace” when there is not going to be peace. These false leaders are not sent from God, but they will do things to make it appear that they are “God sent.”

23 But be alert; I have already told you everything.

It may be possible to be misled, at least in some ways, as a believer, by false leaders and teachers. This may have severe temporal consequences. Jesus teaches us to be alert and watch what’s going on so we will not be caught off guard by someone claiming to be a leader from God who is not. We need to keep studying all that Jesus has told us and the entire Bible to avoid deception.

24 “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,

During this time, on Earth we will face deception and suffering; then, in the heavenly realm we will also see things happening. Namely, the sun and moon will not give their light. Jesus does not say how this will happen, but He tells us to look for it’s possible happening during our lifetime. The light of God can be so bright that lesser lights are darkened or not seen at all.

25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

There have been periods of time when we have seen shooting stars, sometimes in abundance. There are some who worship the sun, moon, and stars, and do astrology, and in various periods of history different false gods have been identified with these lights, stars, and constellations. These false gods will be shaken in the minds of their worshipers. In addition, the demons or powers of darkness will learn that their time is coming to an end.

26 Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.

Jesus called himself “the Son of Man.” He left no doubt that He would be the One coming at the time these events happen. Jesus will return as He left us – in the clouds; therefore, we cannot mistake His Second Coming or think that false messiahs are the real Messiah.

27 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.

The angels of God will serve as “reapers.” We know that the physical dead bodies of believers in Jesus Christ will be raised to life. Those who have died physically will return with Jesus in His coming and their bodies will be resurrected and restored – raised imperishable. Those followers of Jesus who are alive when He comes will be gathered with all of God’s children from heaven and earth. We pray for and look forward to that day, and Jesus wants us to be prepared for any suffering that may occur before His return or at His return.

[Feel free to leave your comments, conclusions, and thoughts as a Comment on the Bible Lesson Forum. We can learn from one another.]

Five Questions for Discussion

1. What types of battles, incidents, or troubles should believers flee? How do we know when we should fight instead of flee in a situation? What might believers say or do when they believe God wants them to flee and someone calls them a coward or disloyal for fleeing?
2. In various parts of the world today true followers of Jesus Christ are suffering persecution or various hardships because of current events. Where might some of this suffering be taking place in our world today? Pray for all those enduring or about to endure these troubling times.
3. How can knowing that God can cut short days of suffering encourage you and enable you to encourage others? How can knowing these facts help you in our daily prayers?
4. What does Jesus say false messiahs and false prophets will do in an effort to mislead people? What can believers do to avoid being led astray?
5. How did Jesus say He would return? How does knowing this make a difference in the hope believers strive to maintain?

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