

## PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THIS WORLD

Mark 13:1-25

Key Verse: 13:10

"And the gospel must first be preached to all nations."

In the last chapter Jesus taught highly educated Pharisees and Sadducees about the spiritual world by talking about why King David calls Jesus, "Lord." It is philosophically a very controversial item. However, spiritually it is a very appropriate verse to understand the spiritual realm and God's covenant to mankind. Next, Jesus mentioned about a poor widow's offering. The amount was very little. But the quality of her offering and her offering attitude excelled their arrogant act of putting bundles of money in the offering box. God wants our hearts, not the sacrifice. Today Jesus talks about the signs of the end of the age. When we think about the signs of the end of the age, they seem indeed horrible. We feel unfortunate that we are born into the world. But we should not. We have a great mission to carry out and fulfill for the glory of God. What are the signs of the end of the age?

### I. The beginning of birth pains (1-8)

First, the disciples' false fantasy about glory (1-4). Look at verse 1. "As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!'" This one verse again reveals Jesus' disciples' minds, crazy for the fantastic dream world and the elegant temple stones and the priests' garments. The disciples firmly believed that Jesus would establish an earthly messianic kingdom and they would all be cabinet members, including Bartholomew. Even though they had not had even a necktie each, they dreamt that they would have better garments and better temple stones and ten times better honor and glory. Those who followed the footsteps of Jesus went crazy for the things of the world for the time being. There are many who, like the disciples, never lived in the real world. There is a man who has been an [undergraduate](#) for the last eight years. He wants to be a medical doctor. But his grades do not reach the level of entering medical school. He never took the MCAT exams. Now he married. Still, the fantasy [about being a](#) medical doctor, and later a rich man, makes him crazy every day. There is a boy who is attending a renowned university. He first entered engineering school to make a huge amount of money after graduation. But he could not catch up with school studies and homework. So he changed his major from engineering into one in which he can just get a [diploma](#). But after graduation nothing is likely to happen. So he wants to go to France as an exchange student. In the past, when Napoleon Bonaparte ruled and when DeGaulle ruled, France was called "The Glory of France." But these days, France is a tourist attraction and the place of enjoying physical desires. It is difficult for anyone who goes there to come back without losing his or her integrity. It is difficult for anyone to get out of there without experiencing an event which turns out to be a nightmare. His vanity to go to France might be his fantasy after giving up engineering study. It is indeed a dangerous occasion for him. He may regret it throughout his lifetime. He will be a man of vacances. If a person becomes a man of vacances, his future is that of a lifetime wanderer like Cain in the Old Testament.

I don't mean that one should not have a fantastic and romantic dream. As a young man, one who does not have a fantastic dream or desire to become a cabinet member has something wrong with him. But we must do what we must do. At the same time we must have a fantastic and romantic dream. But if we only have a fantastic and romantic dream, we become a man or woman of vacances. In short, we become descendants of Cain or disciples of Jean Jacques Rousseau.

Look at verse 2. Jesus answered them, "Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Jesus was teaching about the vicious cycle of human history. According to Toynbee, world history is composed of challenge and response and another result comes out. In a word, his view of history is based on Hegel's dialectics. Jesus' view of history is more simple. Jesus said, "Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." The immediate prediction was the destruction of the temple. It actually came to pass. In 70 A.D. Jerusalem fell to the besieging army of Titus, the Roman general. He desecrated the temple and demolished it completely until not one stone was left on another. This was done in order to take out the plated gold in between the stones. The historical fulfillment would come when the temple was torn down and a Muslim mosque replaced it. What a tragedy. But fact is fact. In order to remove the mosque from the temple place, they had Christian crusades for 174 years. But they failed. Jesus' prophesy concerning the temple building is also an allegory of human civilization, which dazzles the human mind but whose resources are nothing but stone, the dust of the ground. Nevertheless, men as incorrigible sinners, have an indomitable desire to possess the things of the world in their hands.

What was the disciples' response? Peter, James, John and Andrew were greatly surprised at Jesus' words. Their surprise was twofold. One was their understanding of human culture. The other was their lack of a sense of history. Anyway, their surprise was an end to all their fancy dreams. One of them came and asked Jesus privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"(4) To Jesus, the disciples were future leaders through whom the world should be changed and world history should be set on its right track. However, they had no insight to see the world and its future.

Second, the world is the place of deception (5). There are many companies, banks, stock markets, governments, capitalists and peasants. When we watch carefully what they are doing, they are cheating and being cheated. So St. Paul said that the world is the place of deceiving and being deceived (2Ti 3:13). Most companies compete with each other to destroy each other. They merge and one company is destroyed. They have abundant money. But this competition by the brain melts their bones every day. Banks are the same. There was a bank. It was inferior to another bank. Finally, it was merged and its employees were all dismissed overnight. There are many kinds of industries. America thought China was the best market for the people of the United States. But now Chinese goods occupy all the stores of the American market. We cannot buy much that is not "made in China." Because of this, America is very competitive with the people of Chinese industry. Generally, all men who wear pants think they are smarter than others. If one should realize his inferiority, he finds a more inferior person. Then he lives thinking of the one who is inferior to him. But he cannot get out of competition. He cannot be an exception to

the deception of the world. He must fight back against the competition and deception of the world and the burden of life and the insecurity of the future. In order to deceive or defeat our opponent we must work hard. Dr. Isaac Baek goes to the Argonne Laboratory at 6:30 a.m. and returns home at 9:00 p.m. Otherwise, he cannot keep his position. In order to finish at the University of Chicago, one must overcome the curve system, defeat all others and get a diploma. Maybe Northwestern is even harder. How nice it would be if the world were like the paradise which God made first! But after the Fall, the world became like a place of deception.

Third, false prophets (6). There are two kinds of people. One kind is the people whose hearts are like flintstone. The other kind is very gentle and weak-minded. Brutal and strong people mask themselves as witch doctors and deceive weak people to empty their pockets. In 1998, I came from Korea after the World Mission Report. In the Chicago UBF, thirty of the members had contacted witch doctors. Witch doctors sprinkled water on their foreheads and told their fortunes. Even though it was lying, they felt good. When they thought about the witch doctor's lying again and again, they began to feel that the lies were true. Then the thirty of them became useless to God's world mission ministry. Soon after, they formed their own group and went out to make a hallelujah fellowship. Among them, one man who finished his Pharm.D. died suddenly at his desk, sitting in the chair. Another one died of a heart attack. One was sincerely asked to remain as a prayer servant. But he ignored the request and ran away. On the way he had an accident. Only his head is alive. After that they became very quiet and didn't bother campus evangelism and world mission work in UBF. What a gorgeous America! What a gorgeous-looking American people! What gorgeous blonde-haired and blue-eyed American women! But even President Reagan's wife Nancy Reagan visited an astrologer regularly. The number of astrologers is more than 20,000 in this country. Formerly, Christianity was known as the national religion. But school prayer is forbidden and those who preach the gospel are known as a cult group. One day an IVF man came to me and said, "Any organization that does not accommodate modern culture is a cult." I knew the IVF founder Stacy Woods. I knew his secretary, David Adney and Dr. Hans Berke. They found in me something, and wanted to make me an IVF man. They invested in me a reasonable amount of money for 15 years and let me go around to 34 countries to speak. But I was crazy for UBF ministry. Their plan to make me an IVF leader failed. One Chinese American IVF staff called me a mellow Stacy Woods. It meant I was a successor to Stacy Woods. But now such a strict Bible study group as IVF is accommodating 21st century culture, which forbids school prayer and encourages human rights and a pleasure-seeking lifestyle. It is common sense that until one finishes college he should not drive his own car. But these days young high school kids are driving their own cars and going around many nights a week. False prophets are very happy to devour them. They say, "It is not necessary to live a life of self-denial and carry the cross daily and devote yourself in the world mission purpose. That's the old style." On the other hand, God is continually keeping up to fulfill his purpose of making America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But to a 21st century person, America, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, sounds so awkward that they cannot open their mouths properly to pronounce this sentence.

Fourth, rumors of wars among the nations (5-8). Look at verses 5-7. "Jesus said to them, 'Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, "I am he," and will deceive many. When you hear of

wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come." In verse 7 Jesus talks about wars and rumors of wars and we are alarmed by the wars and rumors of wars. America grieved over the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. China grieved because they did not want to follow the exact communist manifesto of the Soviet Union. So there was another cold war between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Hong Kong and Taiwan were part of China. Taiwan is still independent. But the leaders of Taiwan are all suffering from intensive constipation. After taking heavy drugs for the constipation they go to the toilet. They see dark and small mice-like things come out. The most serious problem was the war between the United States of America and Vietnam. France formerly colonized Vietnam. After World War II they wanted to occupy Vietnam again. But the leader of Vietnam, whose size was three inches shorter than someone we know, and whose weight was ten pounds lighter, decided to die to defend his country. Finally, many American young people's lives were sacrificed and many mental patients came back. They could not find any honorable title for the war. Jesus said in verse 8, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains." It is marvelous. Jesus did not think that this troubled world, which makes us grieve all the time and sigh every three minutes, was bad at all. Trouble is the birth pain of fulfilling the world salvation plan. It is the starting point of making America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Here we learn we must have a Christian world view. What a marvelous commentary of Jesus on the troubled world. This is the beginning of the glorious day. This is the beginning of gospel preaching. This is the beginning of world evangelization by American people. Who can think like this? Yes, we can! We are not looking at the world as it is. We are looking at the world through the Bible.

From five years ago, we began to pray, "May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." At that time, those who prayed this prayer topic looked absent-minded. Some stared at me with anger. Each time I gave them the announcement, "May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," they prayed with a mosquito voice and left the church building. But these days our members are beginning to love God. They want to do something for the glory of God. No one wants to be a couch potato. Everyone wants to be a great servant of God, greater than St. Paul or St. Peter. Their eyes are shining. They know how to overcome human limitations. These days, when I announce, "We must establish a kingdom of priests and a holy nation by means of one-to-one Bible study and discipleship training," they say, "Amen." These days a young boy is attending our services. He carefully listens to the word of God. He said to his mother, "I want to go to Africa as a missionary." Then his mother, even though she is a wonderful Christian woman, became sad and said, "If you go, then I will go too." Many Americans are conceiving world mission vision in their hearts. This is the birth pain of making America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. From God's point of view, the troubled world is not trouble. Trouble is the beginning of the birth pain of fulfilling God's plan of world salvation. We love America so we pray that America may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But God hopes the world may become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and God's kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven. When we recite the Lord's prayer, it is really wonderful. "Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."

As we know, birth pain is very painful. In reality, men do not know what birth pains are like. But all mothers know that birth pains are very difficult. They are a matter of life and death. But men can know by standing at the side of their wives who are groaning and sweating like a fountain. They can figure out what birth pains are like. The meaning of birth pains is "just beginning." Already 2,000 years have passed away since our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world. But the world is nothing but a birth pain. Therefore, we should not live in the fantasy world. We should not be deceived by witch doctors. We should not be frightened by the wars and rumors of wars in the world. They are all children's soldier games. God has a great plan for each of us.

Yet our Lord Jesus Christ was not convinced that his disciples would not be deceived by false prophets. So in verses 5-6, Jesus said to them, "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many."

II. And the gospel must first be preached (9-11)

When we preach the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ, at first we think people will like it and treat us with delicious gourmet food. Instead of treating us well, they arrest us and beat us up and we are handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. Here "synagogue" generally means all the places the children of God gather. After birth pains, usually a mother smiles looking at her baby. They smile more if a boy baby is born. Our gospel workers' birth pain is to be persecuted. Jesus knew that and said, "On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them" (9). This is the verse spoken to St. Paul. Acts 9:10-12 say, "In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!' 'Yes, Lord,' he answered. The Lord told him, 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.'" To Ananias, Saul was terrifying because he persecuted the church of God. But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Wonderful is the grace of God who forgave the bitter enemy Saul until he repented. He called himself "Paul," a little one. God used him as a shepherd for the Gentiles. Actually, the chosen people Israel could be numbered. But the Gentile people were so innumerable that they could not be numbered. God is different from the narrow-minded and bigoted traditional Jews.

In this confused world we want to marry. We want to make money. But we don't know what to do next, even though we live as Christians. But here we learn what we should do in this troubled world. Look at verse 10. "And the gospel must first be preached to all nations." Jesus does not force us. Jesus loves the world and wants to save people one by one, and finally save all the people. Do you know the first words of Jesus recorded

in Mark's Gospel? Jesus said in Mark 1:15, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" There was a man who was so handsome and his pride was sky high. When he was under 30 he became a Sanhedrin member of the Jewish Council. He drove a four-stallion chariot, saying, "Yeah! Yeah!" with his Sanhedrin robe flowing in the wind. But he did not have eternal life. He had everything. He had scholarship. He had money and fame. But he felt like dying. You know what Jesus said to him? John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

In Jesus' time usually women were not numbered because they lacked labor power and did not make money and the social structure was male dominant. However, Jesus visited Mary and Martha's house one time. Jesus said to Martha in Luke 10:41-42. "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." The story is as follows: Martha was the older sister. Mary was the younger sister. But Mary wanted to be loved more than Martha every time Jesus came. This time also, she grabbed Jesus and began one-to-one Bible study with him. Their one-to-one Bible study was endless. Meanwhile, Martha was preparing food for Jesus and his hungry disciples. Many times Martha called Mary to come and help her. But Mary pretended as if she had not heard her request. Then Martha came to Jesus and complained. But Jesus admired Mary that she studied the Bible one-to-one with him. In this way Jesus spoiled Mary even more. What an interesting story. But Jesus always has a point to teach those who are interested in Bible study. How can we describe the entire story of Jesus' teaching the Bible: in the house, on the way and after the sleepless night. It was not through speech alone, but through his examples. Finally the passion week came. Jesus was in Jerusalem. He was supposed to be hanged on the cross and shed much blood and finish his life. But one day in the early morning he went out and met a person and taught the person the Bible very prayerfully. This is the true meaning of Jesus' birth pain of fulfilling God's hope of world salvation. Anybody would be trembling before death. Jesus also was bracing himself. But he did what he had to do. He taught the Bible to someone near the temple.

Here we learn how to live in this troubled world. What must we do in this troubled world? Shall we be a dead fish floating downstream or do we have to be men and women of God who know the birth pains of our Lord Jesus Christ? In this troubled world the first thing we must do is to preach the gospel to all people. Amen. God bless you.