

# Mark 13:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

## Analysis

**Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved**—the Greek *ei mē ekolobōsen kyrios tas hēmeras* (εἰ μὴ ἐκολόβωσεν κύριος τὰς ἡμέρας, 'unless the Lord shortened the days') indicates divine intervention limiting tribulation's duration. *Ou... esōthē pasa sarx* (οὐκ... ἐσώθη πᾶσα σάρξ, 'no flesh should be saved') means no human would survive—universal extinction without God's mercy.

**But for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days**—God limits suffering because of His elect. The Greek *eklektous* (ἐκλεκτούς, 'elect/chosen') refers to those sovereignly chosen for salvation (Romans 8:29-33; Ephesians 1:4-5). God's purpose to save His people shapes history. This teaches divine sovereignty—history serves God's redemptive plan, not vice versa. God neither cruelly prolongs suffering nor allows His people's destruction. The elect's preservation demonstrates God's faithfulness to His covenant promises.

## Historical Context

AD 70 siege lasted five months—long enough for horrific suffering, short enough that some survived. Had it continued years, complete annihilation might have occurred. Early Christians saw divine mercy in timing. Broader application: God has repeatedly limited judgment for His people's sake. Genesis flood saved Noah's family (8 people); Sodom's destruction spared Lot; Babylonian exile lasted 70

years, not forever; Antiochus' persecution ended after 3 years. Church history shows similar mercy—persecutions end, churches survive, remnants preserved. End-times tribulation, however severe, will be limited for elect's sake (Revelation 7:9-14 shows innumerable multitude from every nation). This isn't universalism—many perish—but God preserves His chosen. His sovereignty ensures history accomplishes redemptive purposes.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. What does God limiting tribulation 'for the elect's sake' teach about His sovereignty over history and commitment to His people?
2. How does God's shortening the days for the elect's preservation differ from universalism (all saved) or fatalism (elect saved regardless)?
3. How should Christians threatened by persecution or tribulation respond to this promise—what confidence does it provide?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ εἰ μὴ κύριος ἐκολόβωσεν τὰς ἡμέρας οὐκ  
And G1487 G3361 that the Lord had shortened G3588 the days no  
G2532 G2962 G2856 G3588 G2250 G3756

ἄντες ἐσώθη πᾶσα σάρξ· ἀλλὰ διὰ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς  
should be saved G3956 flesh G4561 but for G3588 the elect's sake  
G302 G4982 G235 G1223 G1588

οὓς ἐξελέξατο ἐκολόβωσεν τὰς ἡμέρας  
whom he hath chosen had shortened G3588 the days  
G3739 G1586 G2856 G3588 G2250

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 24:22** (Salvation): And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

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