



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 40: It's The End of the World as We Know It

Text: Mark 13:1-37

Jesus knew he was about to be crucified and so in this week's text he leaves his disciples with some warnings about the future, some of which are aimed at us today. However, we need to keep in mind the complexity of Jesus' teaching in this passage. It is apocalyptic and prophetic, which means that he would have had more than one horizon in mind, when foretelling how events would happen. Prophecies in scripture often had this dimension to it, where one event would mean something specific for a particular generation and something quite different for a future generation. In answering the disciples' questions about what was going to happen in the future, Jesus answered in part about the near future that would involve them personally, and then about the far distant future that concerned his own return.

1. Intro

- Read Mark 13:1-2

For the Jews, the temple was a tangible reminder of hope. They believed that once the temple building was complete that the Messiah would come and rule from there, freeing them from the oppression they had known for generations. So when Jesus told the disciples that the temple was going to be destroyed, they would have been devastated.

2. Signs of the Close of the Age

- Read Mark 13:3-4

The three disciples then asked Jesus when the temple was going to be destroyed, because they believed that the destruction of the temple would also mean the end of the world. Jesus taught them that these were two different events. The destruction of the temple was the first thing that would happen, which was fulfilled about 40 years later in 70AD. The second thing that he prophesied about was his own return when he would bring about an end to all things.

- Read Mark 13:5-8

Jesus said that famines, earthquakes and wars would break out before the final destruction of the temple and all of these things did come to pass before 70AD. He warned the disciples that though the 'destruction of desolation' would happen within their lifetime, the famines, earthquakes and wars would not be an indication of the end of the world, but that they would continue to happen until Christ returned and made all things new.

- Read Mark 13:9-13

Jesus prophesied what terrible things would happen to the disciples and the early church before the destruction of the temple, which we later see recorded in the book of Acts as actual events. The fact that he had warned them in advance of what would happen would have been a necessary encouragement to them after the temple was destroyed as they were scattered and persecuted. The situation in Jerusalem was no mistake but a part of God's plan.

It's important for us to grasp this today. Christianity will often have to oppose the culture, but even in the face of persecution, God's church will prevail, and the gospel will reach every nation before Christ returns, as he promised. The awful persecutions that we are witnessing in the Middle East at the moment are no surprise to God, and they will not put a stop to the spread of the gospel.

3. The Abomination of Desolation

- Read Mark 13:14-23

The Jews were well aware of the "abomination of desolation" from the prophecy in Daniel 9:27 & 11:31. But they believed that this awful desecration of the temple had already happened 150 years earlier. The scale of the desecration back then was nothing compared to what Jesus knew was going to happen in 70AD, when the Romans would come in to wipe out the Zealots would have by then already taken over the temple, allowing it to become a plan of filth and sin. So being forewarned about what awaited the city, most of the Christians fled from Jerusalem before the final destruction took place. When Titus came in to destroy and city, more than 1 million Jews were killed, many by crucifixion, while thousands were taken off into captivity. It was one of the most horrific massacres in all of history. Much of Jesus' words were fulfilled in the first century, just as he said they would. We still see the massive forces of opposition against the God's people today.





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4. The Coming of the Son of Man

- Read Mark 13:24-27

At this point, Jesus changes focus from the destruction of the temple to what will happen before he returns. When we parallel this passage with the same story in Matthew, we see the disciples asking Jesus the question, “*What will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?*” In answering their question, Jesus wanted them to understand that these things that were going to happen would not be signs indicating the end of the world, but signs that the world was in its last days, the period of time that would continue until he returned.

5. The Lesson of the Fig Tree

- Read Mark 13:28-31

Jesus then jumps back to their original question about when the temple would be destroyed, saying that it would happen within their lifetime, which it did.

6. No One Knows That Day or Hour

- Read Mark 13:32-37

Jesus then jumps back again to the issue concerning his own return, where he gives his readers some warnings. They would not know when he was going to come back, and neither will we, so in all cases Christ followers should continue to live as though it was imminent.

As complex as this passage is, there are some obvious “take-aways” for readers across time:

I. God knows the future and we can trust him when things look like they are out of control

Though the world of the early church was in utter chaos, Jesus had warned them, and so when the temptation came to wonder what was going on, they did not have to wonder, and that it was all part of God’s plan.

II. There will be a sudden, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ

III. We should eagerly long for his return

- Read Titus 2:11-14

The fact that Christ is returning should cause us to live in a totally different way.

IV. The church prevails in hope

- Read Revelation 21:3-7 & Revelation 22:6-7

Though the church has gone through tremendous struggles over the last 2000+ years, it is encouraging to know that it will prevail.

- ❖ Q: Why is it in some strange way an encouragement for us to know that the world will be in chaos until the Jesus returns, and that we are not necessarily living in a time that is unique?
- ❖ Q: Why is it encouraging for us to know that despite the absolute destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD that God knew about it beforehand, and even warned his disciples about it?
- ❖ Q: Why is it important to really consider the fact that Christ will in fact return and that it will be sudden, personal and visible?
- ❖ Q: If we knew that Jesus was going to return in 2016, what would you change about the way you live your life now and how should that thought influence to the way in which we are living?
- ❖ Q: Does the fact that the church is being persecuted in horrific ways discourage you? If so, how does Jesus’ teaching here help to bring hope to the global church?
- ❖ Q: In what way has Jesus’ teaching in this passage impacted you and what response is he calling you to?

