

Mark 13 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

II. JESUS IN JUDEACHS. 10-16

G. *The Last Week Chs. 11-16*

1. Sunday: The Triumphal Entry 11:1-11

2. Monday 11:12-19

3. Tuesday 11:20-13:37

k. Jesus speaks about the future and the end of the age 13:1-37

1Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!”

Jesus has just spent the entire day disputing with the religious leaders, allowing them to try & trap Him with their clever questions.

But all they did was make themselves look foolish in front of the common people.

The time in the temple grounds had ended with Jesus taking the disciples into the Court of the Women to watch while people dropped their offerings into one of the 13 collection boxes that were there.

Finally, as the afternoon drew on, they began the trek back to where they were staying at Bethany about 2 miles away.

As they left the magnificent grounds of the temple, one of the disciples made a comment to Jesus about how amazing it all was. The temple mount was indeed an awesome spectacle.

Herod the Great had begun the project many years before & even in Jesus day it wasn't finished.

The entire structure was made of white marble & covered a huge expanse. Some of the blocks that made up the retaining walls that provided the base for the temple grounds were 30 feet long & weighed many tons.

It's a mystery how they were transported from the quarry to where they now sit.

2And Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another,

that shall not be thrown down.”

It had taken years of massive effort to place those blocks and they were so huge, what Jesus says here seems far-fetched in the extreme.

But what He said was matter-of-fact. There was no uncertainty in His pronouncement of the fate of the temple.

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 4”Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”

As they made their way back to Bethany, they would take the path that led across the Kidron & up onto the western slope of the Mt. of Olives.

It gets a little steep in some places, so they stopped & rested.

It was then that the 2 sets of brothers came to Jesus & asked Him for more details about his cryptic remark about the destruction of the temple.

They asked 2 things:

1) “When will these things be?”

Meaning, when will the temple be destroyed.

2) “What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”

They wanted to know what to look for that would herald the end of the age.

5And Jesus, answering them, began to say: “Take heed that no one deceives you. 6 many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many.

The period between Christ’s 1st & 2nd comings will be marked by many who will say they’ve come in the spirit & anointing of Jesus but they’re frauds.

Though they will be able to raise a lot of attention & draw away a lot of people, we’re not to be deceived by them.

7But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.

War has the effect on many people of making them think that the end must be near.

Jesus warns that both the rumors of war and its outbreak are not to be seen as a sign pointing to the end of the age.

8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.

The time between His & 2' comings will be marked by major military conflicts & natural disasters on a wide-spread scale.

And while these things are to be expected — they do not, in themselves point to the end.

What does point to the end though is when their frequency & intensity increase.

Jesus calls these things “the beginning of sorrows.”

This was an idiom for labor pains.

Just as labor increases in intensity & frequency as the birth nears, so the rate of both war & natural disaster will increase & deepen as the end of the age closes in.

While it's a bit difficult to track the ancient history of natural disasters because they did not possess the technical measuring devices we do today, history does tell us about the scope of warfare.

And we can say with great accuracy that more life was lost in armed conflict in the 20th Century than in all previous centuries combined!

Some historians & researchers also contend that the rate & intensity of natural disasters also appear to be heating up.

9 “But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.

The inter-advent period will also be marked by persecution for the followers of Christ.

If you look at the history of the Church, you see that the normal state of affairs in most places & decades has been for the followers of Christ to be persecuted.

We don't realize what an incredible blessing it is to live in the USA during the end of the 20th & beginning of the 21st Century!

Even today, in most places of the world, genuine believers are suffering for their faith. In most of Asia, the Orient, Africa, & even in Mexico, Christians are the target of hostile opposition.

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

Despite the hostile environment in which we live till Jesus comes again, we must be faithful to carry the gospel to every nation.

11 But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

Though the world will oppose & persecute the followers of Jesus, we are not to fear that opposition or allow it to stop us in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

For God will take even the opposition & use it to good effect in spreading the gospel.

Jesus gives a wonderful promise here that even when we find ourselves standing before the most powerful & intimidating officials of the world, we need not fear — for the Lord will use that time to challenge them!

They may sit in the seat of human judgment, but God will pour Himself out on us & turn the tables so that it is they who are being inspected.

12 Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

This is a hard saying — not to understand but to accept.

Jesus is warning here that the gospel will fracture families.

Loyalty to Him will cause some to betray the loyalty & bonds of the closest of earthly relationships.

In many Muslims & Hindu nations today, when someone becomes a Christian, his/her own relatives will turn them in or even murder them.

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. 15 him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 17 woe to those who are

pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18And pray that your flight may not be in winter.

The disciples had asked about what was **THE SIGN** of the end of the age. This is it — the sign.

In ch. 9, Daniel speaks of an abomination that is so evil, it results in utter desolation. That is, man does something so evil, so hideous & heinous it demands God's cleansing judgment.

In keeping with the way the word "abomination" as used by the prophets, it refers to an idol.

Here Jesus refers to the abomination which brings desolation being set up in a place it ought not be.

The place most off-limits to an idol was the temple.

The sign that marks the imminent end of the age is when some kind of blasphemous idol is erected in the temple.

Jesus said that when people see this, they are to get out of the region of Jerusalem as quickly as possible.

There won't be time to pack bags — they must leave as quickly as they're able!

19For 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.

The period that witnesses the abomination of desolation will be marked by a level of cataclysm & trouble history has never, ever endured.

20And 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.

While intense, this period of future tribulation will be short-lived.

It has to be — so severe will the trials be that if they weren't of limited duration, no one would be left alive.

The reason God will shorten the time & bring the Tribulation to a hasty end is because He wants to protect "the elect."

In this case, the elect does not refer to Christians — it refers to the nation of Israel, whom God will return His redemptive attention to during this time.

As the prophets & this passage teach us, when the Antichrist sets up His image in the temple & demands all worship him as God, the Jews will wake up & realize he's a gross imposter & will flatly

reject him.

In fury he will go after them to kill them.

But God will dramatically deliver them & carry them into the eastern wilderness where He will protect them for a time.

The antichrist will launch a massive military effort to wipe them out & they, finally hip to the fact that Jesus is their Messiah, will cry out to Him for rescue.

They will say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” & at their invitation, He will come again in glory.

21 “Then

When? During the period of great tribulation.

if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, He is there!’ do not believe it. 22 false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 23 take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

The Tribulation will be marked by widespread spiritual deception.

Even dramatic miracles will be produced by the demonic realm in an attempt to deceive.

24”But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

As the last days of the Tribulation arrive, the very powers of nature will be shaken & things mankind has counted on as stable fixtures of creation will be shaken.

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

One of the ways to know that all the pretenders before Jesus’ 2nd coming were fakes is that they don’t come in this kind of majestic, sky-rending power.

If *everyone* doesn’t see Him coming in the skies with all of heaven’s power & glory at His back, it’s not Him!

27And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

The elect, which at that time will be the Jews, will be gathered from every corner of the globe where they’ve been scattered & in

hiding.

They will be brought to Israel where they will enjoy the reign of their Messiah.

28" Now learn this parable from the fig tree:

Stop right there — what was the last fig tree we encountered?

It was the one Jesus had come to & cursed because it had no fruit. It was a symbol of the nation of Israel & the lack of spiritual fruit Jesus had found in the temple.

Just as Jesus had cursed it & it had died, so the nation of Israel would soon know God's judgment & it would wither & die.

All of this was fulfilled some 40 years later when the Romans conquered & destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

Question: Where is Jesus when He delivered this message to the disciples? On the Mt. of Olives.

Where was the fig tree Jesus had cursed? On the Mt.

And now Jesus is speaking about the fig tree.

There's a good chance they're within sight of the same dried up fig tree when He says -

28" Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has ahead' become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 2 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near— at the doors! 30 Assuredly I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

The fig tree, & in particular, THIS fig tree was a symbol of Israel, which Jesus had cursed & so died.

But now He speaks about a time when it comes back to life & sprouts again.

Just as Jesus' cursing of the tree was prophetic of Israel's judgment & destruction in 70 AD, here He prophesies the nation's rebirth. Which took place in May, 1948.

Then He says that the generation that witnesses this, along with the things mentioned in the verses prior to this, most notably, the beginning of sorrows of v. 8, will be the same generation that sees the end of the age & the 2' coming.

This excites the dickens out me because we are that generation! I full

expect Jesus to come back within my lifetime.

But there's something that makes the return of Christ even more imminent.

7 years BEFORE the 2' Coming is the Rapture, when Jesus comes, not in glory to the earth when every eye will see Him, but when He comes secretly in the clouds & gathers the Church to Himself.

The Rapture takes place prior to the onset of the Tribulation, which then ends with the 2' Coming.

Since all the pieces are in place for the onset of the Tribulation, & the Trib doesn't begin till the Church is taken out — that means the Rapture could be any moment!

What moment will it be?

32" But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

This MUST be a reference to the Rapture & here's why — because other passages tell us that we can identify the day of Jesus' 2' Coming when He comes in glory.

It is 3 1/2 years from the point at which the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple.

Daniel 12:11 says that it is 1290 days.

So, if you were around to see the point at which the AoD is set up, you could count out on the calendar & know exactly when Jesus is coming again.

That means v. 32 has to apply to the Rapture, which doesn't, can't be at the second coming — so, the Post — tribulation position doesn't work.

33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

Since we don't know when the Rapture will be, we need to always be ready.

34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. 35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I

say to all: Watch!"

When Jesus calls His followers to watch — what does He mean?

Watch for what?

Well, take a look at v. 34 & the short parable He tells.

It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

It's human nature to slacken the pace of our diligence when the boss isn't looking. As much as we might like to deny it, there's a tendency to moderate our work based on who's looking.

Of course, there are exceptions to this but far & away, most people work more diligently when their supervisor is watching.

Jesus points this illustration at this tendency.

Just because we don't see Jesus, that doesn't mean we can slacken our being faithful & the diligence with which we pursue Him.

Yes — we live in the age between His 1st & 2' Comings.

But while we wait, each of us has an assigned work & role.

We must be diligent in it because we have no idea when He will come again.

And besides, just because we cannot not see Him doesn't mean He is any less present.

Our Lord is watching — He sees our work & knows the motivation behind it.

At any moment, the day of work will end, & then it will be time to evaluate & reward the life that's been faithful.

Paul had this truth in mind as he ended his letter to the Corinthians —
1 Cor. 15:58

58Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

The best way to watch & be ready for the return of Christ is not to put on a special white robe & go stand on a hillside somewhere — looking at the clouds for any evidence of Jesus.

It's to be faithfully serving in that work the Lord has called you to.