
The Servant-King's Prophecy

Mark 13:1-37³

Russ Kennedy

Introduction

Ever had one of those Sundays?

Visiting a church...

What in the world did they do that for...

Really bad leadership...

At least they have a nice building...

The disciples are having one of those days...

A Shocking Prediction (v. 1-4)

For the last few days, Jesus and His disciples have been to the Temple. He has arrived in triumph, observed the wicked practices in the court of the Gentiles, has overturned the accepted religious practice in a symbolical act. He has engaged the religious leaders in two rounds of theological debate and decisively won. The religious leaders are humiliated and irate. The people are amazed but unbelieving. And now...

¹ And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" ² And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?"

The Temple's Future (v. 1-2)

So much trouble at the Temple around the leadership and practices there. But see, isn't this so beautiful? Herod's Temple was a masterpiece of architecture and stunning beauty. It is as though the disciples are saying, "All the ugliness is with the people. But wow, look at the facilities..."

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Listen, all this will fall. You see all this? You see all this building and all that it represents? It is coming down, stone by stone until nothing is left. I wonder if the sweep of Jesus' arm takes in the city as well. For certain, the sweep of His theology includes Judaism. All this grand religious edifice will come down.

The Disciples' Questions (v. 3-4)

The scene then changes to an interesting location. They are sitting on the Mount of Olives which rose about 150 feet higher than the Temple. They are right across from it – this place that had been ordained for the worship of Yahweh and yet had no place for God in the flesh walking as the glory in its courts.

So the inner disciples, Peter, James and Joh joined by Andrew came for a bit of a private discussion. They have talked it over among themselves and understand that Jesus has predicted something they need to understand.

So they have two carefully crafted questions...

When will this happen? This will be a cataclysmic event that has happened before in history at the exile. So, when?

What signs will precede it? How will we know to get ready for this event? It can't be good for Jews. It involves us and the Messiah somehow. So what should be looked for to know the destruction is near?

A Series of Warnings (v. 5-23)

In a series of warnings, Jesus warns them what to watch out for in the last days. Now, we know from other texts that the *last days* began with the resurrection. All Christians have lived in the *last days*. This teaching from Jesus in Mark is about future things or what Bible teachers call Eschatology. We did a series a couple of years ago on this subject. If you are new to the Chapel and would like to read or hear that series, it is available at Sermon Audio.

There are two important principles that we developed in that series that I want to highlight here.

- Most Bible prophecies have three fulfillments: one in the prophets time (near fulfillment), one related to Jesus' time (partial fulfillment) and one in the far future (final fulfillment). What Jesus says looks backward to something that has already happened, looks forward to something that will happen around 40 years later and even further to something that is still future for us.



- Daniel 7-9 and 11 as well as Matthew 24-25 and 1 -2 Thessalonians establish your timeline/schema not the book of Revelation.

Let me summarize what we generally teach about the Lord's return and then you will see how the Markian text reflects that. In this area, we understand that there are many different ideas and teachings and that many of you will hold to a different Eschatology. For us, that is fine. We invite you to consider how we think about these things as we have wrestled with the Scriptures.

The doctrine of last things and the idea of the last days begins at the resurrection of Jesus and runs until the return of Jesus.

There is yet a future seven year period (called Daniel's 70th week) centered around the final judgment on Israel. In the middle of that period, there will be an event called the Abomination of Desolation which will be easily identified when it happens.

Towards the end of the seven year period, just before the Day of the Lord, Jesus will come with the believers who have died and gather the believers from all over the earth, an event commonly called "the Rapture". At that time Jesus will be giving out the rewards to His people.

During the time called the Day of the Lord, the wrath of God will be poured on the unbelievers on the earth. At the end the remaining unbelievers will make war on Jesus and He destroys them at a horrific battle. .

God will then set up the throne of judgment and judge all people who have not believed in Jesus and will cast the devil, his angels (demons), hell and unbelievers into eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire..

The earth is renovated by fire and a new heavens and new earth emerge which will be the eternal dwelling place of God and His people forever.

To summarize, we teach that the Lord will return for the church at the end of Daniel's 70th week before the Day of the Lord. We agree together as elders that either (1) there will be a future literal 1000 year rule for God's people commonly called the Millennium (it is not "Jewish") ended by a rebellion and then the final judgment or (2) that there is no Millennium and the New Heavens and New Earth will emerge immediately after the Day of the Lord and the Last Judgment.

It will be very important to remember that Jesus is talking in the era in which many of Daniel's prophecies are in their middle, Jesus-era fulfillments. So some of these have a partial fulfillment in the Apostle's life time and will have their final fulfillment in the last days at Jesus' final return.

Don't Be Lead Astray (v. 5-8)

So Jesus begins with their first warning.

⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. ⁷ And when

you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

There will be many who will claim to be the Messiah. They will come in Jesus name, claiming His authority and His identity. Many will be deceived and will buy into their lies.

There will be much trouble but this is only the beginning of the end. There will be wars, earthquakes and other natural disasters. But the end is will not come yet. These are only like birth contractions and pains.

This and what follows was partially fulfilled between Jesus' ascension and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. But it has not yet been completely fulfilled. Only the full destruction of the Temple and the end of the Mosaic Covenant and Levitical system has been fulfilled.

Be Ready to Suffer (v. 9-13)

Jesus also warns them to be ready to suffer. Notice the structure in the next set of paragraphs:

Don't be led astray (v. 5)

Be on guard (v. 9)

There will historic tribulation (v. 19)

Be on guard (v. 23)

Stay awake (v. 37)

Listen to the text...

⁹ "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹ And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Your religious leaders will turn against you...

The Message must be preached in all the world...

The Messengers will be equipped to preach...

Your personal relations will turn against you...

This was begun to be fulfilled during the ministry of the Apostles but has not yet been completely fulfilled. The gospel is still going out into all the nations and will until all of the elect have been born and saved.

Know the Scriptures (v. 14-23)

Jesus is explaining what will happen after the time the temple will be destroyed. The disciples would know the text he is referring to and would key what he is saying to them against that text from **Daniel 9:24–27** which says:

²⁴ “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. ²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

And now what Jesus says beginning with Mark 13:14:

¹⁴ “But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, ¹⁶ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁷ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸ Pray that it may not happen in winter. ¹⁹ For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. ²⁰ And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. ²² For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

The Identifying Event (v. 14)

This is in the middle of the 70th week of Daniel. It will be so clear when it happens that God's people will know what it is and will be able to locate themselves in the Biblical timeline. An event like this had happened during the time before Jesus came and happened again in 70AD when the Roman general Titus destroyed the Temple. And the final fulfillment of this is yet in our future.

The Warning to Flee (v. 15-18)

The powers that be will turn on any one identified as "God's people" whether Jew or true Christian. The point here is to know that what will happen next will be a horrible time of persecution for God's people.

The Ensuing Tribulation (v. 19-20)

I personally agree with Kent Hughes who writes, "... 'the abomination that causes desolation' will find its ultimate fulfillment in the future and that the destruction of Jerusalem is a paradigm which contains the essential elements of the Great Tribulation at the end of time. The already multiple fulfillment of the term argues for this. Also, "the man of lawlessness" referred to by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10 supports the view that "the abomination that causes desolation" refers to the ultimate Antichrist who will also fulfill Daniel's prophecies. The destruction of Jerusalem and the advent of a God-usurping personage will signify the approach of the end of the age." [p. 143]

A Glorious Arrival (v. 24-27)

All this trouble and tribulation is not the end. It just precedes the triumph of Jesus' glorious arrival.

²⁴ "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And 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 Galactic Cataclysm (v. 24-25)

There will be a cosmic, a galactic cataclysm right at the end of the days of the great tribulation. While we cannot know exactly what this is picturing, it certainly seems that the structure of the universe and our local system begins to crumble. This may simply be the wake created in the fabric of the universe as the Lord sweeps through towards the Day of the Lord.

The Glorious Appearing (v. 26)

Jesus makes His glorious appearing. His second coming is with power, glory and majesty. It ripples the universe, opens the heavens and culminates in His appearing in the clouds. His return will truly be, as the angel told the disciples at Jesus' ascension, in the clouds.

The Great Ingathering (v. 27)

This is the ingathering of the saints. It is commonly called "the rapture". It is taught in Matthew 24:29-31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Those believers who are still alive at Jesus' coming will be caught up to Him to meet Him in the air. Then Jesus will pour out His wrath in the Day of the Lord. Then the end will come.

A Near Fulfillment (v. 28-31)

Jesus wants the disciples to understand that there will be a near fulfillment.

²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

From an Object Lesson (v. 28)

Jesus uses an object lesson to help the disciples understand. The fig trees would have just begun to bud and put out their leaves. When this happens, people know that the summer is near. We usually think of this with certain flowers.

For the Disciples Understanding (v. 29-30)

So when the disciples, the immediate audience of Jesus’ teaching, see the things Jesus has predicted come, then they will know that these things, the things they have asked about are near. For us, all these centuries later, when we see these things unfolding then we know that Jesus’ coming is near. So what sounds like a single event actually has two fulfillments. What Jesus predicted with the destruction of the Temple did happen in the lifetimes of Peter, James, John and Andrew.

Just a comment here: this has led some students and teachers of the Word to say that all that was predicted here has already happened in around 70AD. This is no future fulfillment of this. Because they deny multiple fulfillments, then they misuse verse 30 to prove what they believe. This view is called, Preterism. It is held by many Reformed Bible teachers. There are many problems with this view, not the least of which is it is very difficult to point to an appearing of Jesus in the clouds in 70AD. The solution is in the idea of multi-fulfillment. The fulfillment in 70AD is the middle fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. What Jesus is predicting here is a restatement and expansion of Daniel’s prophecy.

With a Sure Confirmation (v. 31)

Jesus establishes the surety and reliability of the Word of God. Daniel prophesied this. Jesus, based on Daniel’s prophecy expands it and Mark wrote it down for the use and benefit of the church. Even if the universe were to end (which it doesn’t by the way) God’s Word will continue forever. What a comfort.

A Pointed Warning (v. 32-37)

Now Jesus gives a very pointed warning that we need to hear and heed ourselves.

³² “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

Its Cause

The warning is grounded in the fact that we do not know the day nor the hour. We will know very generally the times and seasons. But because the last period is shortened for the sake of God's people, then no one can set a date nor give an hour. No one knows. Only the Father knows. All date setting for the coming of Jesus is foolish and unbiblical.

Its Command

But there is a command that is important because we do not know. We must stay awake, be alert. This theme runs through all of Jesus' teaching on His second coming. As we are waiting for those last days to unfold and for those who are living through them, stay awake. Stay alert. Hold on. He will come. He will deliver.

Reflect and Respond

Be willing to submit your thinking about the Lord's second coming to the Bible. Many of you have been taught something quite different from Mark seems to be saying and what we believe and teach here at the Chapel. These are important truths but we also want to be generous and kind to those who think differently.

Are you prepared for the kind of trouble, trials and suffering that is spoken of here? In the west, we know little of this kind of travail. But I hope that solid, stout doctrine will feed and fortify your souls so that you will be steadfast in that day.

Are you prepared to face Jesus? Oh, you will, believe me. Either you will be gathered in as one of God's elect believers or you will be in horrific assembly before the throne and final judgment. In the light of Jesus' coming, believe, repent and be saved.