



# WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?

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Mark's gospel is powerful and fast-paced. Spending few words, Mark moves from one event to the next in the life of Jesus as he shares the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (ref. Mk. 1:1). He does so, in part, I believe, to help us as readers understand the urgency of the message of Christ and to come to the understanding of the truth of who Jesus is, God's Messiah.

The events leading up to (Mark 13) have moved quickly. In Mark 11, Jesus entered Jerusalem, He cleansed the Temple, and His authority has been questioned. Jesus spoke in parable, speaking against the religious leaders, (Mk. 12) and has been tested by the religious leaders as they have asked questions of Jesus trying to trap Him.

Moving to the text in Mark 13, I believe it is essential to keep all of these events in our minds to help in our understanding of (Mark 13) and the things Jesus says.

Many who study this passage, along with the parallel passages found in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, have come to different understandings on the meaning and the "time" that Jesus is speaking about.

Some have used these texts to spark fear or even excitement in the discussion of end-times. It seems in every generation; there is no shortage of "prophecies" about the end of the world.

I remember Y2K and how the world was just going to fall apart at midnight as all the computers, on a global scale, would crash. There was a scare in 2012 because the Mayan Calendar did not go beyond that point, and many thought it was the end of the world. Of course, there are books and series of books such as the "Left Behind" series that sparks any number of fanciful imaginations concerning the end-of-times. With every generation, there seems to be no shortage of "prophecies" about the end of the world.

Looking at this text, what is Jesus speaking about, and what can we understand for today?

## THE QUESTION

Chapter 13 begins with a question.

### **MARK 13:1-4 (NKJV)**

*"Then 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!" And 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." Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"*

If we can, in our minds, try to picture this scene. The Temple would have been a magnificent sight. It was a source of pride and identity. As Jesus and the disciples are walking past, the disciples speak about the grandeur of the Temple "...see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" as if Jesus could not see these things for Himself. However, His answer, as with every turn of the pages of Mark's gospel, is not what they expected to hear. *None of this will be left standing!* They walk down

through the Kidron Valley and sit at the Mount of Olives. From here, they would have looked back West to Jerusalem, the Temple in their view, as the disciples ask Jesus, *"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"* These question, along with where we are in the story, is our background. These questions are what Jesus is answering in chapter 13.

Since Jesus has come into Jerusalem, He has been speaking about judgment coming to Israel, and here is the final scene of judgment. Jesus had interrupted the Temple activities for a day, but now Jesus talks about the destruction of the Temple.

*Where this Temple falls, God's kingdom and Jesus' kingdom message is planted and begins to grow.*

## THE SIGNS

In **(Mark 13:5-13)**, Jesus foretells of signs leading up to the Temple's destruction. He warns them so that they should not be deceived. "... *"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet."* **(Mk. 13:5-7)**. The consistent message Jesus gives His disciples is (v9), *"But watch out for yourselves..."*. Jesus does not want His disciples to be unprepared or not expecting the events that will take place.

Here, Jesus tells them of things for which they should be looking. Nation rising against nation, earthquakes, famines, troubles, the disciples being delivered to councils, beaten, the gospel preached to all nations, brother betraying brother, and children rising against their parents. All of these things, they are to be prepared for. These will be the beginning of signs.

Each of these things did come to pass, just as Jesus said. Jesus is not talking about a future event, two thousand years or more in the future. He is talking about events they would see and experience in their lifetime. The context of this whole chapter will be their life.

**Mark 13:30 (NKJV)**

*“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.”*

## **THE EVENT**

Looking back historically, as we can today, we have these events described for us through the historian Josephus. Picking up a copy of "The Wars of the Jews," you can read how Josephus describes in detail the horrific events of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. A three-year siege that is graphic and unimaginable, as severe famine overshadowed the Jewish, Roman war. I will not go into the details here. However, I do want us to realize that the events, as Jesus describes, are historical. Jesus would go on to say:

### **MARK 13:14 (NKJV)**

*"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."*

The "abomination of desolation," as used by Daniel (ref. Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), describes enemies attacking Jerusalem. The Gospel writer Luke helps us in an understanding of what Jesus is saying:

### **LUKE 21:20 (NKJV)**

*"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near."*

Jesus says, when you see armies surround Jerusalem, then you know it's time to flee to the mountains. There is no time to waste, leave what you have, and escape quickly. This is going to be bad, and you don't want to be here for it. Notice though that God is over all these events. Nothing is outside of His control.

### **MARK 13:19-20 (NKJV)**

*"For 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. And 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."*

Jesus speaks of false "Christs" (or messiahs) and prophets that would arise in these days. Indeed there were. These men were not men who would proclaim the word of God, but people who would see the earthquakes and hear the rumors of war, they would rise claiming to be the Messiah, Israel's deliver. They would gain followings and lead the people to revolt against the Romans out of a sense of nationalistic pride.

Men such as these, Jesus warns, do not believe. It is not Me, and even these would turn on the disciples of Jesus. The gospel Jesus is for all people and not the Jews only. The disciples' lack of participation in these rebellions would lead even their own to turn on them.

Jesus continues in (13:24ff), and this is where many people understand Jesus to shift His thoughts a bit and begin describing the "end of the world." However, I do not believe this to be what Jesus is doing. I understand Jesus to be still speaking about the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem; however, now He talks about "after that tribulation" (13:24). What I understand Jesus to be speaking about is the end of the Temple and the Jewish system as they have known.

I wish we had more time to go into all of this. However, here is what I would like for us to notice concerning all the events Jesus is speaking about.

### **MARK 30:13 (NKJV)**

"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place."

Jesus is not describing the end of the world. He is describing an end of an age. The Temple and the temple system would be coming to an end. In Jesus, God's kingdom has come. In Jesus there is newness and a New Covenant

## **THE APPLICATION**

So what do we take away from all of this? There are a few things I wish for us to consider as we look at Mark 13.

## Watch

If I counted correctly, going through chapter 13, Jesus says "take heed" or "watch" seven times in this passage. Though we are not living in the time of the first century, we are living in time of the expectation of the return of Jesus. I believe His instruction to watch or take heed is one that we can apply to our lives today. How we live our lives, how we conduct ourselves is essential as we wait for His return.

### **TITUS 2:11-13 (NKJV)**

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”

## God's Word is Faithful

Another point we can consider is that God's Word is true and faithful. Jesus says in **(Mark 13:31)** *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”* We can have confidence and trust in God's Word. The events Jesus spoke of, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, came to pass just as He said they would. He did not want His disciples to be unprepared or ill-informed of what was going to happen.

Our lives can become chaotic; it may seem as if our world is closing in on us. However, we can have confidence in His word. The Lord does not want us to be unprepared or ill-equipped for the challenges of life. He desires that we live as His disciples who, even in the chaos, remain faithful and follow His word. Our confidence and our trust should be in Him and His word.

### **BLESSINGS!**

Steve E.

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