

From the Destruction of their Temple to the End of This Age

Read Mark 13.1-37

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS & SETTING THE CONTEXT

1/ Our [last lesson](#) was about the temple in Jerusalem which had been corrupted from its Divine purpose by those who had hijacked and usurped it for their own religious self-advancement. When Christ entered it, observed it, and ‘cleansed’ it, He was announcing His rejection of it. That same rejection was symbolically pronounced by the ‘sign-act’ of His cursing of the fig tree [ch 11.12-14, 20-21]. In all those same acts, Jesus was announcing and instructing His disciples and us about His coming agenda to restore and re-enact the building of His spiritual Temple – which was Himself. **See Ephesians 2.11-22; 1 Peter 2.4-10; 1 Corinthians 3.16-17; 2 Corinthians 6.16-18; John 2.18-22 & 4.19-24; Revelation 21.22; et. al.**

2/ We must see this overall Divine plan in everything Jesus is saying and doing in order to understand what He will be teaching us in this lesson. Because when He announces the destruction of that temple, it is so He can enact His plan to re-build His Temple in Himself through the effective proclamation of His Gospel of the Kingdom – even while at the same time we must endure much tribulation, suffering, rejection, and opposition as we faithfully follow and serve Him.

3/ So what Jesus will do in this message is to prepare, strengthen, and embolden His disciples [and us] to know what to expect and how to successfully navigate our Gospel witness through it all – until He comes to save us in the end and bring in the fullness of His promised Kingdom.

4/ We will try to stay within the narrative of Mark’s account of Jesus’ message [as it was related to Him by the apostle Peter], while at the same time flesh out some of the interpretations by referring occasionally to the parallel narratives in **Matthew 24 [what we call ‘The Olivet Discourse’] and Luke 21.5-36.**

I / vv 1-2 / Jesus foretells the destruction of their temple

1/ His disciples point out to Jesus the beauty, grandeur, and majesty of the temple construction and buildings. And it was. This is what we call the Second Temple. The first temple [Solomon’s] was destroyed by the Babylonians in 585 BC. This much smaller re-building of the temple began when the Babylonian exiles returned to Jerusalem [**Ezra 3.8-13**]. Then Herod the Great began a years-long project to enlarge and beautify it [**John 2.20**] until it was then double the size of even Solomon’s first temple. In fact, those ‘re-modeling’ projects were still going on at this time and would continue until close to the time it was re-destroyed as Jesus will predict. It was a beautiful structure – and they were proud of it! Could it be they were trying to commend its beauty to Jesus in an effort to ‘sell’ Him on its significance to them...and should be to Him?

2/ Jesus knows what He will do...and what will become of this temple. He had come to establish Himself as the ‘chief cornerstone’ of God’s spiritual Temple. This temple was marked for destruction because of their chronic disobedience to Him and to make way for the New Covenant Temple in Himself. **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.”** He is announcing to them the coming destruction of their beloved temple and city by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD. In truth, He had already wept over this coming destruction as He was entering Jerusalem a few days before in His ‘Royal, triumphant entry’ [see **Luke 19.41-44**].

3/ These words – along with His prophetic promise in **John 2.18-22** will be thrown back in His face as He hung on the Cross [see **Mark 14.57-58 & 15.29**].

II / vv 3-4 / ‘When will these things be...and what will be the sign...?’

1/ These questions are more loaded than we can expand upon here. But this is yet another shocking declaration from Jesus. They had had to process so many such declarations in the past few weeks. But we have to try to understand as best we can what the disciples were asking in these two questions? [1] What? Our temple is going to be destroyed? **When** is this going to happen? [2] **and what will be the sign when**

all these things are about to be accomplished? Here is one of those junctures where we need to draw on Matthew's account of their question: **...and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?** [Matthew 24.3]. Because they couldn't even think of the destruction of their temple in any other context than 'it must be His coming to bring this present age to its end and usher in the fullness of the everlasting Kingdom they were anticipating and expecting.' They were still holding on to their traditional Messianic expectations of Christ establishing the fullness of the Kingdom of God by His coming to sovereignly and publicly ruling over an earthly Kingdom...then and there. They would have to continue to grow into Christ's Gospel agenda in the coming days. Even when Christ was ascending into Heaven and promising to send the power of the Holy Spirit on them in a few days [Pentecost], they were still thinking that maybe *that* was the coming and establishing of the everlasting Kingdom of Glory: **'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'** [see Acts 1.1-7.

2/ At the time of these temple questions in **Mark 13**, they were still in that 'end of the age' and 'Christ's coming in power and glory' expectation mindset.

3/ So we need to hear in Jesus' answers that He doesn't make any attempt to answer their question about **'when will You return? when will You come to publicly rule and reign over the whole earth in Your Kingdom?'** He does promise them that *He will return*, but it will be only *after* many other events take place in the meanwhile of this present age. But He also announces to them that *there will be many experiences they will suffer through during the interim between that present time and the time of His coming of the fullness of His Kingdom.*

III / vv 5-13 / See that no one leads you astray ... be on your guard

1/ What will follow in Jesus' warnings is many-fold – *and they would begin immediately and continue for a yet-undetermined span of time during this present age – both local, universal, and cosmic:*

- **vv 5-6** / Many will come in His Name – claiming to be the Christ or speaking authoritatively for Him – saying that they are the Christ who is to come or claiming to know when He is coming.
- **vv 7-8** / There will be local and international warfare – repeatedly, constantly, chronically – because that is the nature of sinful, fallen, rebellious mankind.
- **v 7** / There will be universal upheavals – earthquakes and famines – as the course of the ages
- **vv 7-8** / ***But these events will not be 'signs' of His immediate return! 'This must take place, but the end is not yet ... These are but the beginnings of the birth pains.***
- **v 9** / Christ's faithful witnesses will be persecuted, beaten, falsely accused and condemned – *but it will be for the purpose of our giving witness to Christ and His Gospel!*
- **vv 10-11** / ***And from that then-present time, '...the Gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations...'*** [see also Matthew 24.14]. They would learn in a few weeks following Christ's resurrection, that there was yet a 'Great Commission' to be carried forth, proclaimed, and fulfilled before Christ would come.
- **vv 12-13a** / Family members will betray one another because of their profession of Christ and their faith in Him – indeed, **you will be hated by all for my Name's sake** – the whole culture of the generations to come will hate, persecute, oppose, and even kill those who remain faithful to Christ.

2/ **v 13b** / But those who remain faithful to Christ though it all will be saved in the end by His coming and by bringing them into the everlasting Kingdom He has promised ... at the same time those who opposed them and Christ will be destroyed.

3/ But we must keep in mind also that **Jesus is here announcing what kinds of 'signs' would accompany the times that were beginning immediately at that time and would continue on until 'the end of the age.'** **BUT no one of those same 'signs' nor all of them together will in themselves be announcing the time or season of His coming – only that *He is coming!***

4/ In truth, Jesus gave *'the parable of the ten minas'* in **Luke 19.11-27** just prior to His royal entry into Jerusalem to preface and prepare them to not interpret this event nor the time and season it was announcing:

As they heard these things, He proceeded to tell a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the Kingdom of God was to appear immediately [*that is, in its fullness*].

IV / vv 14-23 / The abomination of desolation

1/ But now ... Jesus returns to the exchange they had to begin this discourse in vv 1-4...

- His announcement that their temple would be destroyed: *“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.’”*
- and their question: *“Tell us, when will these things be...?”* Now, Jesus WILL tell them how they can know that the destruction of the temple is impending and upon them.

2/ Here’s the ‘sign’ they need to look for: **But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand)...** We have heard this phrase many times. It means simply: *a person or thing who is an abomination [morally or ceremonially unclean] to God who wreaks havoc, destruction, desolation.* There has been much discussion and debate re: what it means and when and how it will come to pass. Volumes have been written about it. And when Jesus repeats the little phrase **“(let the reader understand)”** He is alerting us that we need to pay close and careful attention to what He is saying so that we do indeed understand and not misinterpret what it means and what it refers to.

3/ **Where does this phrase come from?** Jesus is quoting and referring to the Book of Daniel. In truth, here is Matthew’s account [Matthew 24.15-16]: **So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...[etc].** This is essential to our understanding of the first, most immediate, and most applicable identification and interpretation of what and who **the abomination of desolation** is. **THEY** will see it – **those who are in Judea ... and he [it] will be standing in their ‘holy place,’ which will include both their temple and city.**

4/ These Daniel Scriptures Jesus quotes are found in **Daniel 9.27; 11.31; 12.11.**

- **Daniel 9.27: 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.** This refers to the historical 70 AD destruction of the temple by the Romans – as we shall see in **Luke 21.20.**
- **Daniel 11.31: Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.** This refers to a previous desecration of the temple by one of the Greek kings, Antiochus Epiphanes, in 167 BC ... which sparked the Maccabean revolution and temporary liberation of Jerusalem in 164 BC.
- **Daniel 12.11: And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.** This refers again to the 70 AD destruction of the temple which ushered in ‘**the times of the Gentiles**’ [those ages during which the Jews will again be dispersed, oppressed, and ruled over by Gentiles ‘**until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled**’ [Luke 21.24] ... and continues to this very day.

5/ And so, the most immediate identification and interpretation of ‘**the abomination of desolation**’ is, as Jesus says in **Luke 21.20** is **“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.”** Jerusalem had been surrounded, held under siege, starved, invaded, massacred, led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles many times before – but this **abomination of desolation** will last until **the end...until the time of the end...at the end of the days [Daniel 12].**

6/ But still, as horrendous, catastrophic, and cataclysmic as this event shall be, *it will not yet at that time be ‘the end of the age.’ It will be a ‘pre-enactment’ of the end of the age, and it will be the catalyst and igniter that leads to the end of the age – but ‘the end is not yet’ [Mark 13.7] and ‘These are but the beginning of the birth pains’ [v 7].*

V / vv 24-31 / But in those days, after that tribulation...

1/ The ‘tribulation’ that Jesus foretells has been on-going from that time and is continuing to the present day [see again vv 7-8]. See also **John 16.33; Acts 14.22; Romans 8.35; Revelation 1.9; et. al.** But now, Jesus does tell the disciples that the ‘end of the age’ will come ‘**after that tribulation.**’

/ What Jesus describes here is the cosmic disturbance and disruption which will accompany His appearing. This is His promised coming of **Acts 1.10-11; Revelation 1.7 / 6.12-17; 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18; 2 Peter 3; etc., et. al.**

2/ At this coming - ...**in those days, after that tribulation...** - Christ will both ‘save,’ deliver, rescue His people from their tribulations ... and He will begin the systematic, progressive, comprehensive destruction of His enemies ... and commence the events of the ‘passing away’ of the present cursed creation to bring in the New Creation [see again **2 Peter 3.8-13**]. There will be many other accompanying events during these cosmic upheavals in the creation, and God has determined how long those final judgments upon the earth and its inhabitants will last.

3/ Jesus offers the fig tree to serve as another illustration [not necessarily to be confused or equated with the cursing of the fig tree in **ch 11.12-14**]. The fig tree was like most other fruit-bearing trees, but it was one of the most common to their experiences. In the spring, long before it bears its ripe fruit, it will begin to leaf out. So when all of these events Jesus has foretold beginning in v 5 begin to occur like leaves unfolding from their buds to full leaf, numerous events one after another – many simultaneously – repeatedly over the centuries from that time to this time ... until the end ... we are to see them all as promises of His coming. As Jesus says in **Luke 21.28: Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.** Or, as He says here in **Mark 13.29: So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that He is near, at the very gates.** [See also **James 5.9**]

4/ But no one of them, or many of them occurring simultaneously or in clusters even, should be interpreted as a ‘sign’ that the coming of Jesus is immediate. *It may be, but then again, these calamitous events have been repeatedly occurring in continuous sequences in every generation from that time to ours.* But the very fact that they keep occurring and Jesus has not appeared as of today is only a stronger confirmation and consolation that **He is coming as He promised!** “**Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay...**” [Hebrews 10.37] [See again **2 Peter 3**]

VI / vv 32-36 / ‘And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!’

1/ Jesus will now sum up and make His application to His disciples and all His followers in all the generations who would come after them. He has already taught them that they must be prepared for time to continue on from their day until ‘the end of the age’ yet to come in an unknown and unannounced day ...

But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows...

2/ During this interim, intermediate, and meanwhile time – however long it turns out to be – they must be faithful witnesses to Him. In truth, they must prepare from that time and place to *proclaim the Gospel to all the nations* [v 10; **Matthew 24.14 & 28.18-20; Mark 16.15-16; Luke 24.44-49; Acts 1.8; Romans 16.25-27; et. al.**

3/ So, after reminding them [and us] throughout this message to “**Be on your guard...**” [vv 9, 23, 33], He teaches us that the way we remain on our guard is to “**keep awake!**” which He will repeat four times in these six verses. The ways we ‘**stay awake**’ are: recognizing He is in full and sovereign control over all the events of our lives and the world in which we live; committing ourselves to be engaged in faithful Gospel witness to all the nations of the world; remain faithful to Christ and His words even during the most trying of persecutions, tribulations, adversities, and chaotic world events. *Jesus is coming! And we win in the end!*

And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations – and then the end will come! [Matthew 24.14]