

SERIES: **The Jesus Journey**

TEXT: **Mark 13:1-23**

TITLE: **Alert not Afraid**

This chapter is one of the most controversial within Christian circles

Eschatology- study of the last things/end

- Some give in to fear and uncertainty
- Some obsess over dates and signs

My desire is not too be overwhelmingly exhaustive and in so doing to lose half the room,
But rather to bring enough clarity so that we can grasp the intent of Jesus' words

What the Bible reveals about these things is meant to do at least two things

1. Encourage us to press on and endure despite hardship
2. Awaken us to be alert and not be led astray

Mark 13:1-2 As he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Teacher, look! What massive stones! What impressive buildings!" ² Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another—all will be thrown down."

Josephus, a 1st century Jewish historian, described the Temple as

- having gold plates of great weight on its front face that would blind all who looked directly at them when the sun rose and shone on them
- having massive white stones that from a distance looked like a mountain covered with snow

The disciples are mesmerized and charmed by its outward beauty- Jesus is not

Mark 13:3-4 While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives across from the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, **when** will these things happen? And **what will be the sign** when all these things are about to be accomplished?"

Across the Kidron valley, looking towards the Temple mount, they question Jesus about His statement

When Jesus predicted His death & resurrection, they didn't ask Him when it would happen, but at Jesus' prediction of the Temple being destroyed, alarm bells go off in their heads

Their question goes further than just the temple; implied for them is the messianic kingdom & His reign (end times)
"once the temple goes, His throne is set up here and now"

Jesus does not give them what they want, specific signs and times

We will see, v3-23 are not signs that the end is here, but rather that the end is not yet coming

Next week, V24-27 the true signs of the end, but will come so fast they will provide little warning

Jesus instead gives them what they (and you and I) need to know-

A warning against obsession and deception, and instructions to discern the times so they would not be disheartened, panicked, fooled or led astray

There are 3 main ways to approach the following verses:

- One view sees these verses as dealing only with the destruction of the temple by Rome in 70 A.D.
- One view sees this as solely referring to the end times and Jesus' second coming
- A 3rd view sees these prophecies as having a twofold fulfillment (one near, one far) (common in scripture)

Note that verses 5-23 form a chiasm:

- a. Deceivers (5-6, Watch!)
- b. International wars (7-8, When you hear...)
- c. Persecution (9-13, Be on your guard!)
- b. War in Judea (14-20, When you see...)
- a. Deceivers (21-23, Watch!)

Mark 13:5-6 Jesus told them, "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and they will deceive many.

False deceivers will feed the hope of many- but as for His disciples, they must watch out/ discern against delusion

Mark 13:7-8 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed; these things must take place, but **it is not yet the end**. ⁸ For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are **the beginning of birth pains**.

Notice that international commotion and natural disasters are not signs of the end (it is not yet the end)

The beginning of birth pains- there is no telling how long a mother's delivery will be, only that

- 1- pain will intensify, & that
- 2- this pain is not purposeless

Jesus' followers don't need to be alarmed when alarming things are happening because these things must take place in order to birth a new better world

Mark 13:9-13 "But you, be on your guard! They will hand you over to local courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues. You will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a witness to them. ¹⁰ And it is necessary that **the gospel be preached to all nations**. ¹¹ So when they arrest you and hand you over, don't worry beforehand what you will say, but say whatever is given to you at that time, **for it isn't you speaking, but the Holy Spirit**. ¹² "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ You will be hated by everyone because of my name, but **the one who endures to the end will be saved**.

The disasters in v.5-8 will overtake anyone in the path of armies or standing on geological fault lines, but the persecutions in v.9-13 will be directed at Christians because they are Christian (singled out)

- 'Local courts' (sanhedrins) & 'synagogues'- Jewish authorities

- 'Governors & kings'- Gentile authorities

- 'Brother, father, children'- Family settings

From every angle they can expect to be persecuted for their faith in Jesus

But in the face of pressing persecution Jesus provides 3 things:

A purpose (v10)- they will be a witness and take the gospel to all the nations

A promise (v11)- the Holy Spirit's power for them to speak the right things, in the right way, at the right time

A call to preserve (v13)- Matt Chandler "those who don't quit, win"; so hang on...to Christ

The next verses have been cause for much debate

Mark 13:14-20 “When you see **the abomination of desolation** standing where it should not be” (let the reader understand), “then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ A man on the housetop must not come down or go in to get anything out of his house, ¹⁶ and a man in the field must not go back to get his coat. ¹⁷ Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days! ¹⁸ “Pray it won’t happen in winter. ¹⁹ For those will be days of tribulation, the kind that hasn’t been from the beginning of creation, which God created, until now and never will be again. ²⁰ If the Lord had not cut those days short, no one would be saved. **But he cut those days short for the sake of the elect, whom he chose.**

The phrase ‘the abomination of desolation’ would have been not only familiar to the disciples but ear-raising.

Used in the book of Daniel, it refers to a desecration of something holy

In 167/168 BC, Antiochus Epiphanes stormed the Temple, built a pagan altar on God’s altar, and sacrifice a pig on it (unclean to Jewish culture) (this led to the Maccabean revolt)

V14 “where IT should not be” is literally “where HE should not be”

- The historical view says this either took place either in AD 67-68 when the Zealots, protesting Rome, bunkered down in the Temple and made themselves priests & offered sacrifices, or in AD 70 when Rome stormed the Temple and general Titus and his troops entered it and offered their own sacrifices before destroying it
- The eschatological view says Jesus is talking about an antichrist figure far in the future, perhaps what Paul referred to as ‘the man of lawlessness’ in 2 Thessalonians 2:4
 - I believe there is direct sense in which this was fulfilled shortly after, but also a sense in which there will many abominations of holy things by unholy people

What I do want to point out in the immediate context is that Jesus calls people to flee Judea when they see this
The tendency would have been to flee to the Temple for refuge,
but this will no longer be a place of protection but of judgment

In v19, the phrase ‘tribulation’ has also been the subject of much debate

Again, I would submit that prophecy by nature tends to have a twofold fulfillment,
so we should approach these things with open hearts and alert minds

Yet again we see that in the midst of severe calamity, God’s hand is never far (v20) and His mercy is at hand

Mark 13:21-23 “Then if anyone tells you, ‘See, here is the Messiah! See, there!’ do not believe it. ²² For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ And you must watch! I have told you everything in advance.

Once more Jesus gives a warning to not be obsessed nor deceived, as many will be, but instead keep watch

This section, and the one we will cover next week, can easily cause confusion and even anxiety.

The task is yours to dig deep into these things in such a way we cannot cover on a Sunday sermon.

But I think a helpful approach for us this morning is to look at what question Jesus is actually answering.

The disciples want to know “when” and “what will be the signs” of the end;

Jesus gives them the answer to this question instead-

How do we live in difficult times?

I want to offer 2 practical takeaways

- **BE EXPECTING BUT NOT OBSESSIVE**

We can be so distanced from considering the certainty of the coming last days, or so caught up in deciphering their every detail, that we neglect our Christian duty in the present day

Ephesians 5:15-16 Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—¹⁶making the most of the time, because the days are evil.

Question: If you knew this day was the last day, what would you do different?

Forgive; love; enjoy; witness

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Have you become obsessive over the news reel? Or passive regarding your faith?

- **ENDURING IS MATURING**

When trouble comes, it should not take us by surprise or cause us to be fainthearted, because Jesus has promised not only that difficult times will come, but also His deliverance

1 Peter 4:12 Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you.

We tend to ask "what's wrong?; why me?; why now?"

Because the world is undergoing birth pains that will only intensify, but will birth a new kingdom

James 1:2-4 Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

Romans 5:3-5 And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, ⁴endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. ⁵This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The Bible never promises us that God will hold back difficulties and pains in this life;

What it does promise is that God will not waste an ounce of heartache or a single tear you shed

And that when the storm passes, in Him you will remain

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful.

Press in and press on! Your deliverer awaits to welcome you on the other side of this trial

One commentator wrote:

"When Jesus talks about the future, his words are meant to change the way we live in the present"

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

James 1:12 Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Beloved, the rewards for your endurance will monumentally overshadow any trial you are in now- endure

BULPEN-

4 main approaches to Biblical Prophecy:

- The Historicist view- Biblical prophecy is currently unfolding
- The Preterist View- Biblical prophecy was future to the original readers, but already fulfilled for us
- The Futurist View- Biblical prophecy awaits future fulfillment
- The Idealist / Symbolic View- Biblical prophecy has no single fulfillment, only transcendent principles & recurring themes

Concerning the millennium:

- Premillennialism (historic or dispensational)
- Postmillennialism (reconstructionist)
- Amillennialism

1st unit (v.5-23)

Forms a chiasm:

- d. Deceivers (5-6, Watch!)
- e. International wars (7-8, When you hear...)
- f. Persecution (9-13, Watch!)
- b. War in Judea (14-20, When you see...)
- a. Deceivers (21-23, Watch!)

2nd unit (v. 24-27)

The 2nd coming (v.26 at that time)

3rd unit (v. 28-37)

The parables

²⁴ “But in those days, after that tribulation: The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light; ²⁵ the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ “Learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ In the same way, when you see these things happening, recognize that he is near—at the door.

³⁰ “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³² “Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—but only the Father.

³³ “Watch! Be alert! For you don’t know when the time is coming.

³⁴ “It is like a man on a journey, who left his house, gave authority to his servants, gave each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to be alert. ³⁵ Therefore be alert, since you don’t know when the master of the house is coming—whether in the evening or at midnight or at the crowing of the rooster or early in the morning. ³⁶ Otherwise, when he comes suddenly he might find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Be alert!”

2 Timothy 4:8