

“Preparing for the Future”

October 23, 2016

Mark 13:1-13

I. Introduction

Being one of the 12 Apostles certainly wasn't boring. In the days leading up to today's Scripture, Jesus had healed blind Bartimaeus just outside Jericho ([Mark 10:46-52](#)). Then, as Jesus and His disciples were entering Jericho, Jesus had spied Zacchaeus, the tax collector, hanging from a sycamore-fig tree. After getting him to come down, they had gone to Zacchaeus' house where Jesus and His disciples had spent the day ([Luke 19:1-10](#)). Then came Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Being part of that procession must have given the disciples goose bumps. That night they all spent the night at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus ([Mark 11:1-11](#)). Emotions must have continued to run high—I suspect several weren't able to sleep at all.

The next day when they returned to the Temple, Jesus, in righteous anger, had driven the merchants and the buyers out of the Temple. Jesus accused the leadership of turning God's house into “a den of robbers.” But instead of repenting, the religious leaders plotted to kill their own Messiah ([Mark 11:12-18](#)). Jesus and His disciples spent that night back at Bethany with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

After Jesus had returned to the Temple the following day, the disciples had seen the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders attack Jesus from several different directions. It started out with questions concerning Jesus' authority but soon the gloves came off and the attacks became vicious and continual. But Jesus was able to turn the questions back on His enemies “and from then on no one dared ask Him any more questions” ([Mark 12:34](#)). In [Matthew 23:1-36](#) Matthew records the warnings Jesus gave concerning the teachers of the law and the Pharisees just before He left the Temple forever. [Turn to Matthew 23:37-39](#) to see Jesus' final words in the Temple.

Since the disciples knew that Jesus was the Messiah ([Mark 8:29](#)) and the Son of God ([Matthew 14:33](#)) and after all that had just happened, their hearts must have expected Jesus to usher in the messianic kingdom. Although He had repeatedly told them, somehow they had overlooked Jesus' death and resurrection that had to occur first. In today's verses, Jesus prophetically described things that would occur during the time between His 1st coming and His return. In looking at the future, Jesus gave five coming certainties beginning with the Destruction of the Temple.

II. Five Coming Certainties

A. The Destruction of the Temple Perhaps feeling the spiritual emptiness of the Temple, one of the disciples looked back at the Temple and the awe-inspiring view of the white marble with its gold overlay and said to Jesus, “**Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!**” Built of polished white stones with its eastern wall covered in gold, the Temple’s main structure gleamed in the evening light. The Temple and the surrounding buildings had taken nearly 50 years to build and they weren’t finished yet. King Herod had used huge blocks of marble—some weighed 100 tons and measured 37 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 12 feet high. No matter how one looked at it, the Temple was an awesome sight.

The size and splendor of the Temple must have been a symbol of strength and permanence—nothing could destroy God’s temple. But Jesus replied, “**Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.**” Sadly, Jesus had no hope for the Temple. Just as He had called the Pharisees “**Whitewashed tombs . . . full of dead men’s bones . . .**” in [Matthew 23:27](#) and had condemned Israel for being like a fig tree with no fruit and withered at the roots, He predicted that the internal rot of the Temple would bring it to destruction.

In AD 70, Jesus’ words were fulfilled when the Roman army under Titus Vespasian destroyed the city and the entire Temple complex. As God’s instruments of justice, the Romans built massive fires that caused the stones to crumble in the intense heat. Having taken all the gold and thrown the remaining rubble into the Kidron Valley, all that was left were the massive foundation stones that formed the footing for the retaining wall under the temple mount—stones that make up the Wailing Wall today.

B. Many Will be Deceived Having crossed the Kidron Valley and climbed the Mount of Olives, Jesus and His disciples looked back at the Temple. As they were looking, “**Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?’**” Having heard the prophesy of the Temple’s destruction, they wanted to hear more about the future. According to [Matthew 24:3](#), their whole question was. “**Tell us, when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?**” They wanted to know about the end of the present age.

Like the Jews in general, the disciples expected just a single coming of the Messiah. But God’s plan was for the Messiah to come twice—first as the Suffering Servant of [Isaiah 53](#) and, later, as the conquering King of [Revelation 19](#)—with a period of time between the two advents. In His response to the disciples’ question, which is also recorded in [Matthew 24-25](#) and [Luke 21](#), we see the longest

recorded answer given by Jesus to any question. Since this conversation occurred on the Mount of Olives, this discourse is often called the Olivet Discourse.

In answer to their question, Jesus gave some precise birth pains, or warning signs, that would precede His return. These birth pains will come suddenly, build up gradually, and lead to a time of terrible sorrow and tribulation for the whole world. First, Jesus said, that the world will experience relentless deception by false Messiahs—“Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many.” This is the 2nd certainty: many will be deceived. Jesus warned His disciples to “Watch out”—for that matter, Christians are warned through Scripture to be on guard. Turn to 2 Peter 2:1-3. There have been false messiahs, false prophets and their misled disciples throughout history, but their numbers will increase towards the end of the age—leading up to the ultimate false teacher—the Antichrist of Daniel 8:23 and Revelation 13:1-10.

C. Calamities in the World Jesus continued by warning about the 3rd certainty: calamities in the world. He began by warning about political conflict among nations. “Wars and rumors of wars” have been a reality throughout history, including today, but, following Jesus’ analogy of increased pains, these calamities will increase in magnitude and intensity near the end of this age. Jesus said that believers are “not to be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.”

In addition to the pains of war, “there will be earthquakes in various places.” Luke records that these will be “great earthquakes” (Luke 21:11). The Book of Revelation records several great earthquakes that are part of God’s wrath during the Tribulation itself (Revelation 6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 16:18). In addition to wars and earthquakes, there will be famines. Once again there have been famines throughout history, but as the end of the age approaches they will become more severe; culminating with famines in the Tribulation that kill large numbers of people (Revelation 6:5-6, 8).

Jesus said that, “These are the beginning of birth pains.” Just as when the moment of childbirth grows closer, the pains intensify both in frequency and severity, the disasters that are found throughout history will increase in frequency and severity as the end of this age approaches.

D. Increased Persecution Jesus said, “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.” The 4th certainty is increased persecution. As Jesus had warned several times, persecution will come to those who follow Him—not just to the 12 Apostles but to all Christians. The Apostle Paul wrote later in 2 Timothy 3:12, “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

It's not easy to face courts, governors, and kings, but Jesus assured His disciples that the Holy Spirit would minister through them whenever they had opportunity to witness. This isn't an excuse for poorly prepared preachers or teachers, it is an encouragement for all believers who sincerely want to witness for Christ and honor Him. In [John 14:26](#) Jesus said, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." Every Christian has the Holy Spirit inside them as a Counselor, Teacher, and Guide.

Jesus added that this persecution would also come from members of one's own family, "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death." Those who follow Christ must be willing to endure persecution even from their most intimate friends and family members. However, there is a ray of hope in this darkness, persecution may result in death, but not even death can stop the spread of the Gospel.

E. Deliverance of Believers The reason the world hates believers is because it hates the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus said, "Everyone will hate you because of me." Jesus expanded this thought later in the Upper Room—[turn to John 15:18-20](#).

Jesus finished by saying that those who endure suffering for His sake demonstrate by that very endurance that they are genuine believers and as such they "will be saved." This is the final certainty: Deliverance of Believers. Conversely, those who fall away when persecution comes reveal that they never truly possessed saving faith in the first place—[1 John 2:19](#) says, "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us."

III. Conclusion

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray; part of His prayer was for all future believers—[turn to John 17:20-26](#). Because of His love for those who would believe in Him, Jesus had concern for us. He wants to share His glory with us, but while we are here on earth, He doesn't want us to be surprised or misled, that's why He said several times in today's Scripture to "watch out," "do not be alarmed," "be on your guard," "do not worry." There's a saying that goes "*Forewarned is Forearmed.*" Jesus has warned us over and over about what would happen in the future—we have been forewarned. We shouldn't be surprised at what is happening in the world around us: The Temple has been destroyed. There are obviously many false teachers around—some claiming to preach this Book, but the liberal "Jesus" is really an antichrist. There seems to be an increasing number of calamities—wars and rumors of wars are on the rise—there's the Middle East, Islamic terrorism throughout the world, there's North Korea and Iran both

threatening to take on the world, just to name a few. Famines, earthquakes, and other natural phenomena are increasing in number and severity. Persecution is on the rise throughout the world—including here in the United States—we could talk about LGBT agenda. But in the midst of all the warnings, Jesus reminds us that those who trust in Him will be saved.

Jesus and the Scriptures don't tell us these things to scare us but to empower us. As the frequency of the birth pains increase, we can look forward to a time when sin and all its ramifications will be done away with; a time when **“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them” (Isaiah 11:6)**. As the angels told the disciples after Jesus had ascended into heaven in **Acts 1:11**, **“Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”** **1 Thessalonians 4:17** reminds us that **“We will be with the Lord forever.”**

But as we look forward to that time, we must not forget the here and now. We still have the Prime Directive, the Great Commission from **Matthew 28:19-20**: **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** **Romans 10:13-14** says, **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”** Time is short; we must share the Gospel with others before it is too late. How about you? Are you sharing the Gospel with others or is your Christianity a well kept secret?” In **Matthew 10:32** Jesus said, **“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.”** What do your words and actions say about you?