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Last week we looked at the first things Christ said about the coming day of judgment.

First, there will be **false Messiah's**. There were false Messiah's in the apostles' lifetimes and there will be some at the end.

There will be **wars and rumors of wars**. This happened during the lifetime of the apostles and it will happen in the last days.

There will be **earthquakes**. This happened during the lifetime of the apostles and it will happen in the last days. It is easy to prove statistically that they are increasing.

There will be **persecution of Christians**. This happened during the lifetime of the apostles and it will happen in the last days.

Here are some quotes about persecution of Christians today. They are taken from sources that appeared to me to be more factual than sensational.

Christians are the most persecuted religious group worldwide. An average of at least 180 Christians around the world are killed each month for their faith.

(Source: Open Doors USA)

Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors simply because of their belief in Christ. (Source: U.S. Department of State)

In a recent article, Justin D. Long emphasized the startling fact that more people have died for their faith in the Twentieth Century than in all of the previous centuries combined. “During this century, we have documented cases in excess of 26 million martyrs. From AD 33 to 1900, we have documented 14 million martyrs.”

So, while Jesus was talking to 12 apostles in AD33, what He told them about the end times was true of their time but even more true of ours.

We ended at verse 9 last week. Let’s go on to verse 10.

When we look at the verses up to verse 10 we come up with a question that we have to be able to answer. **Why?** What Christ has just told his disciples is that people are sure to suffer in the future. Not only **isn’t God surprised**. He is **planning on it**. It is **certain** to happen. And God is going to allow these evil people to do what they want to His people. He is also going to allow the people of this planet to face the devastations of war and natural disaster. And not only that, the devastation will escalate. **Why?** Why does a loving God allow such things?

Verse 10 gives us the answer.

¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

We have seen this before. It should be no surprise to us. God allows the history of the world to continue, he allows His enemies to breath his air and carry out their evil plans, He allows the world to disintegrate, because He is **waiting for one thing**. He wants every person **who is going to share His presence for eternity** to have the **time** and **opportunity** to **choose so**.

It is important for us to grasp this. The evil that is happening on this planet is horrendous. And God sees every sinful act. He sees the butchering and rapes of our brothers and sisters in Arab lands. He sees the exploitation of human beings around the globe. He sees the anguish of families losing loved ones in tornadoes and earthquakes. He sees the suffering caused by disease. He sees the effect of fallen humans failing to love their children or their parents. This is not **“a nothing”** to God. Remember that God is absolutely just. It is part of who He is. But there is **a something that is worth waiting for**. There is **a something** that causes Him not to immediately crush the source of all this suffering. He could do that at any time. He won’t do it by our rules or our preferences. When justice comes it will be thorough and complete. He will punish every human being who has not responded to Christ by trusting Him for their salvation. He will punish every human who has rejected Jesus Christ. God **will** end suffering. But He will allow it to continue until the last human being **who is going to receive Christ** prays that prayer **to** receive Christ. All human history is waiting for **that event**. And then time as we know it can end.

Now let me ask you, if a person coming to Christ is that important to God, how important should it be to us?

The gospel is going out to all ends of the globe on a very advanced rate. If what I read is correct, the gospel is reaching more lands more quickly than it ever has. People are hearing the good news at an escalated rate. Everything Jesus predicted is happening. It happened to the disciples, but it is happening more now.

Next in our text Jesus gives His disciples **instructions** about how to respond when the Jewish leaders pass them onto the Roman government for punishment. The direct application for this passage is to the guys who Jesus **said this to**. Our question is, does this apply to us if we find ourselves in the same situation. I don't see any reason that it wouldn't. I think every Christian who has ever been delivered up to a government for persecution simply because they are a believer should obey this instruction of Christ.

¹¹ **But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.**

If we find ourselves in a situation where we are going to be facing a judge because we are Christians, what God wants us to do is trust Him for the outcome. How often do we act like **our future relies completely on us** and our efforts? In this situation we aren't to be distracted by fretfully trying to figure a way out of this mess. So really, if we are in a mess like this, and we are forbidden to prepare a speech or even a method of defense, **what would we likely be doing?** It would seem to me we would be **praying and praising God**, which is exactly what we always find the disciples doing when they are in prison. This command frees the followers of Christ to focus on more important things.

Again, this is not an instruction to preachers in how they are to prepare their sermons. If I prepared like that you should fire me and hire a workman in the Word. But if we end up in jail together some day, you may have to remind me that we need to let God speak through us and not plan ahead of time what we are going to say. Because I will want to prepare. I will want to trust my efforts to deal with the situation. But that is not what God wants.

Paul, after having this very thing happen to him said this to Timothy. **2 Timothy 4:17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.**

It is interesting that we are to be so dependent upon the Holy Spirit in this particular situation. This is a dependence upon Divine Guidance at its purist. We aren't allowed any other source at this point. Those who say that God no longer

does such a thing miss the point here I think. **God still puts words in our mouths.** I would guess that all of us have had experiences in ministry efforts where what came out of our mouths was **so true** and **effective** that we knew it did not come from us. For whatever reason, that is all that God will allow in this particular situation. I am guessing that primarily God has something to say to the unbelievers in that setting and He does not want us messing it up. Why this situation? We don't know. But we do well to pay attention to it. God intends to issue a clear message to those who are guilty of persecuting Him and His.

¹² **Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.** ¹³ **And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.**

If any of us lived in so many of the Arab countries right now we would say, oh this is so true. How many reports have we read where this exact thing is happening now in Arab lands? If you come to Christ and you are a Muslim, it is very likely that your Muslim family members will turn you in to the authorities. If they are **faithful to their beliefs** they must. And if they **do not want to be persecuted** themselves they must. So it happens all the time. And those who come to Christ **know** it will happen and **expect** it to happen.

And why are these followers so hated? It is because of the name of Jesus. It is only for one reason. These people have turned to Christ for eternal salvation. And that choice means they are turning their backs on any other solution. It isn't because they have become obnoxious people. It isn't because their political views have changed. It is only one thing. They have **trusted Christ** to save their souls. That is the true test of whether something is pure persecution. Is it an attack because the person believes in Christ. Is it for the name of Christ.

We are too quick to define things as persecution in our country. For example if we hold a Bible Study at our home and it violates zoning regulations about parking, we call that persecution. It usually isn't. It may reflect laws that are unfair and not well thought out, but the intent in most of them is not to single out Christians. We are moving toward a time when Christians **will be singled out for what they believe.** But that does not happen very often in our country yet. Now we are often singled out because we stand against things we believe to be immoral. That is not exactly the same thing as persecution because of the name of Christ. Anyone who speaks against the immorality will be hated, no matter what god they say they serve. Our text describes persecution because of the name of Christ.

As for the disciples and Christ's followers, this was a regular occurrence. Paul was the enforcer for one group of Jewish persecutors. These Christians were being

hunted down and caused to suffer for one reason. They loved Jesus and were following Him.

Notice again the use of the word "all".

And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.

I bring this out every time I notice it because it is very important we interpret words in the context of how scripture uses them. When we read this we understand what it means. But if we take every word outside of the context we miss what it means. Not every person on this planet will hate us. But we will be hated by people all over the world for loving and living for Christ. We certainly will be hated by all of Christ's enemies. But the people at our church will not hate us for Christ's name sake. Do you see what I mean? All needs to be defined by its context. All does not usually mean all of everything, all of each and every one. It means all of the context it is talking about.

¹⁴ **"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.**

As I have been studying, I have been reading commentaries from two distinct points of view. The first is that this event Christ is speaking of will happen in the future. Another is that the whole thing happened in the past. The futurists, like John MacArthur say that this whole thing is talking about Christ's final return in the future. This interpretation then requires a future temple in Jerusalem that has not yet built yet. With that interpretation we cannot really believe that Christ could come back to judge the earth at any time. The temple must be rebuilt first. It also seems a stretch to believe that when Christ says in verse 30 that this generation won't pass away until these things are accomplished that he wasn't talking about the generation that was living at the time.

One of the questions the disciples ask is, when will the temple be destroyed? So if we are to understand Jesus answering their question in a way that they could understand it, we would tend to seeing Christ answering this question in a way that happened in their lifetime.

But if we are to accept this as all happening back in AD 70 we have other issues. How should we understand that the gospel must first be preached to all nations in verse 10? Could this mean that at Pentecost this prophecy was fulfilled, or maybe in Paul's journeys? This all would have happened before the destruction of the temple.

But the passage that is the most difficult to overcome in the historicist or Preterist view, the view that all the things that are spoken of in this passage were completed in AD70 is our current verse.

The abomination of desolation reference.

Abomination means that which is foul, detestable, immoral.

Here is information from John MacArthur's commentary-

The book of Daniel mentions the abomination of desolation three times (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). In Daniel 11:31, the term is used to describe the historical perversion of Antiochus IV, the Seleucid king who controlled Israel from 175-165 b.c. Calling himself "Theos Epiphanes," which means "manifest god," Antiochus desecrated the temple in Jerusalem by sacrificing a pig on the altar, forcing the priests to eat its meat and erecting an idol of Zeus within its walls. With ruthless abandon, Antiochus oppressed the Jewish people, slaughtering thousands and selling many more into slavery. The intertestamental apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees detail both the atrocities committed by Antiochus and the Jewish people's ability to overthrow him and purify the temple.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Mark 9-16.

Now the problem for the view that this happened in history is that as far as we can tell, this didn't happen. Here is an event that is the signal for these people to evacuate the city. It is something clear that Christ is referring to. It should be something that anyone watching would know what it is. It would be something similar to someone sacrificing a pig on the altar. The closest thing that happened to this is there was bloodshed from a "Jew verses Jew" conflict in the temple. I think it is unlikely that the common person would have read that as the abomination of desolation.

You can often tell when a position is weak because they are forced to spend a lot of ink explaining how something makes sense when it really doesn't. This is the verse where that happens for those presenting the view that all of this has already been fulfilled.

It is also interesting that the phrase is added- let the reader understand. Mark is talking to Romans, not Jews. Why would he say this? Does this imply that this is for future readers in a time period that is coming? Is this a warning to those living very close to the end of time?

"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

This prophesy is very specific to geography. It is only those who are this specific region who are told to flee. And they are told to flee by removing themselves from cities and towns. They are to hit the wilderness. They are to go off grid. And they are to do it right now.

¹⁵ **Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house.** ¹⁶ **And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.**

What we see here is an emergency. This is the last minute. There is no time left at this event. The message is, if you are present when you hear of this event, run for your lives. There is no time to pack. The next event is going to be awful. As I study this I don't think there is really a direct application to make on this. We don't live in that region and there is no mention of this being global. If we were in Israel, there would be a direct application, especially if the temple gets rebuilt. There was surely an application if a person lived in this region during 70AD. A person would have been safest in the wilderness where the Roman soldiers would have had no reason to go.

¹⁷ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ¹⁸ And pray that your flight may not be in winter. ¹⁹ 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.

Again we are talking about a specific geography and a specific event. It is easy to understand why a person would want the gentlest of climates. Essentially these people will be camping without the benefit of the nice camping equipment we have now. Mothers, how would you like to take small children into this environment?

Now again, is this in the future or the past? If it was in the past, it is essentially saying that the tribulation experienced was the worst in human history. That is possible. The Roman overthrow of Jerusalem was devastating. It was awful. Parents were eating their own children.

If it is in the future it will be worse than that. We have all probably read of the inhumanity that has been inflicted to humanity over the course of human history. It is absolutely amazing how cruel humans can be to each other. But what is described here is the worst cruelty ever experienced. That is considerably horrible. Awful. Unthinkable.

But look at the context here. Do you see any break in the suffering due to being a Christian, due to having Christ's name, and this tribulation? It appears that this tribulation is a result of **Christ's name**. This is not true of the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Jerusalem fell because they were trying to throw off the yoke of Roman rule. It had nothing to do with Christ. If that is true, this prophesy cannot be fulfilled in the first fall of Jerusalem. I am not sure it is true. But it is worth looking at.

Now let's look at how bad this tribulation was.

²⁰ 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.

The word for shortened means to end abruptly or to stop instantly. God will not allow this period to last to the place that it wipes out all human life. So He will

suddenly and surely cut it short. We have no way of knowing if such a thing was done in AD 70. If this is future we can at least know that God will not allow this torment to go longer than it must. And notice why. For the sake of the elect. That is always what God has His eyes on. His people. He does not allow them to suffer one more day than where something is accomplished in eternity for them. God notices your suffering. It is never meaningless. It may appear meaningless. But it is not. There is a reason and purpose for suffering. When it no longer serves an eternal purpose for the benefit of believers, it will be suddenly and abruptly ended.

²¹ **Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it.** ²² **For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.** ²³ **But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.**

I am not sure how or if this happened in AD70? Most of those who claimed to be Messiahs were **prior** to AD70. I haven't seen much evidence of them coming after 70AD. So maybe this is referring to the future end times. That is how it is commonly understood and presented. There will be those who claim to be Christ, with the anti-christ being the one that is the most deceptive. In fact, this person will express **such spiritual power** that you can't tell by just looking that this person is evil. It will take spiritual and biblical perspective to know that this person is false and evil. This person will probably be followed en-masse by people who say they love Christ but don't know their bibles. This person will do supernatural things, or at least appear to do so. And he will speak our vocabulary. This guy is going to be flat out dangerous.

This is just one more indicator that we cannot allow ourselves to trust our impressions. We can't think that we can intuitively know what is true. We must depend upon God's word. Anyone proclaiming to be the Messiah is not unless He splits the sky in His appearance and fits every prophesy that is given about His second return. Many who claim to be believers but who don't know the Word will be proven to be false by following this guy.

Look at the beauty here of God's provision for us. Mark says **take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.**

Mark is essentially saying- you have been warned. You have no reason to be seduced. I told you ahead of time. These people are going to be slick. They will be greasy. They will be impressive and seductive. They will be deceptive. But they will not fit the bill spiritually for a Messiah. They aren't true. And if you don't trust your perceptions but trust God's word, you will be able to prove it. Oh that we would get this point in our lives. Oh that we would get to the place where we believe nothing above God's word. When will we stop doing the things

we feel so compelled to do and believing the things we feel so compelled to believe and simply trust God to lead and guide us?

We will probably experience in our life times people who have spiritual power to produce amazing results. But we cannot allow ourselves to be swayed by power and results. We have got to trust God to lead and guide us. We have got to allow God's word to be the thing that teaches us true from false, good from evil, wrong from right.

I hope that many of you are studying our passage with me. I am having a very difficult time knowing how to interpret it. I think our applications are safe ones, but it would be good if we could pull the gifts God has given to this church in studying this passage.

Also, we know that we are racing toward the day of God's judgment of the earth. Whether or not this passage describes it, there are plenty of others that do.

There will be a day for sure where God will separate the sheep from the goats, the believers in Christ from the deniers of Christ. If there is any test you really want to be prepared for, it is that one. If you have never trusted Christ as your savior, today would be an excellent day to do so. And if you are playing around with sin in your life, today would be an excellent day to repent.