

Mark 13:1-9

¹ 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!*" ² 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." ³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

⁵ And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He,*' and will deceive many. ⁷ 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. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows. ⁹ But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.

This is one of those texts that make me wish we had a full time pastor. We are embarking on some end times teaching. True scholars are all over the page on their interpretation of this passage. And much like what we faced in our **book of Romans study**, it is difficult to come to a conclusion on this passage without having a solid understanding of **the book of Revelation**, which in turn requires a very thorough understanding of **the whole Old Testament**.

I can only tell you that I will do the **best I can do** with the time I have to do it in. It will not be a deep understanding of end times. But I think we can do justice to the passage for our **application purposes**.

We are still on day Wednesday of Christ's last week. He has been teaching in the temple courts all day. Now they are walking out of the city and the disciples draw Christ's attention to the amazing temple building.

Now we need to keep in mind that this is the **center of Jewish worship of God**. It is probably a sign to the Jewish people that God is still with them. After all, look at this remarkable building. It truly was amazing. They probably saw its presence as something very spiritually significant. So when the disciples talked about the structure, they were probably talking in an admiring and awe filled conversation. Their conversation would have been a very positive one, even a thankful and praiseful tone. It might be how we talk about **our building** when we finish it. We need to **understand that** to realize how the disciples would have received what Christ said next.

, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*"² 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."

The disciples are saying look at the workmanship here. Look at the beauty. Look at the magnificence. Look at the amazing thing that God has given to us. Jesus says, in essence, **look at the future trash heap**. This statement about the temple was a death blow to their nationalistic view of life. These buildings represented what the Disciples hoped Christ would take over. This was the system they wanted a part in running. The **temple** was the **nation of Israel** as far as they were concerned.

Jesus is not only **not impressed** with this beautiful building. Not only does He **not build on what they are saying**. He tells them by what He says that this building will have **no significance** in the lives of the future followers of God.

And Christ describes in physical detail exactly what was to come. He **knew** the devastation to follow. He **knew** how devastating that day would be. And this building which took so very long to build, this impressive wonder of man's architecture, would be completely destroyed. It would have even been **hard to imagine** that something like this could happen. This statement may have taken the disciple's breath away, literally. It would have been that big of a shock to their systems.

The disciples walk a little while until they get to the Mount of Olives. This is the hillside that overlooks the temple building and the city of Jerusalem. So they are probably sitting down looking over the city and the temple by now.

So we aren't surprised to see that, after the disciples had talked about it some privately, that they approached Jesus for more information.

Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately. Now notice that Peter didn't try to correct Jesus this time. He doesn't say, **no Jesus, this will never happen**. He is at least learning that **whatever Jesus said will happen will** happen. Peter still doesn't believe it about **himself yet**. That is coming. But he does seem to believe it regarding every other topic that Jesus talks about.

Now Matthew gives us a little more detail in what the full set of questions entailed.

[Matthew 24:3](#), their full question was, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Mark says

,⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

The disciples understood that what Jesus said had something to do with a bigger time table of when Christ would come into power. They understood that He would take over some day. But they didn't understand how that timeframe was going to work in.

Some believe these two questions are essentially a rephrasing of **one question**, with an understanding that the **destruction of the temple** would happen **at the same time** as **Christ's coming into power**. But that wouldn't have to be the case. It could have been two separate questions with one relating to the other.

It would be like asking Jack, when will the electric work be done in the new church and when can we begin meeting there. They are two separate questions but they relate to one another.

Notice their first question. When. When will this be? What day will this be? What year will this be?

We will see that Christ never answers that question. He does not say when. He never gives a date and a time. He even says that He doesn't know. We have got to wonder at this point, why? Why does God not give a time?

Have you ever experienced this in your life? You are facing a trial or suffering or a difficulty. And you pray about it, but the trial, the suffering remains. And it just seems to go on and on. And you ask God for relief. You ask Him to put the time frame on it **that you** have in mind. Which for us is usually "right now". Right now would be a great time for you to end this Lord.

We ask when will this relationship of mine get better? Or when will this child of mine repent? Or when will this pain of mine subside? And we get no answer.

Well, I think James gives us the answer to this. The **trial of our faith**, the **time we spend believing and trusting God** even when it looks like believing and trusting God doesn't work out so well, the **testing of our faith** produces patience. The waiting produces something in us that is necessary and important for us to live. As it is in our personal lives, so it is in the life of the church. They were to live by waiting. And we still are. So they are not given a date.

Suppose Christ had said that He is coming back on January 1 of 2018. What would have happened? Mankind would have probably done what we are always prone to do with deadlines. Procrastinate. We would have waited until 2017 to start getting ready. Christ often does not want us to know the timetables. Those are His, not ours. It is for Him to plan. It is for us to trust and obey. That is how He likes it. If we have a problem with that we have to learn how to overcome that problem. Because this is how He is.

OK. So Christ doesn't give a date. What other clue do you get from that? Well if Christ wouldn't give a date, we would do well to quit trying to figure one out. If Christ didn't give it, we don't need it. If we don't need it, we would do well to not look for it. And for those who do have a date figured out, we can ignore them.

Whatever date Christ's return will be, we can be sure it will not be the one announced by the next paper book seller charlatan.

Now the first question was "when?". The second question is about indicators that Christ's coming is imminent.

They ask **what is the sign- of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"**

Mark says **when all these things will be fulfilled?"**

So we have the sign of Christ's coming, the end of life as we know it when everything is taken over by God, and these things being fulfilled.

It looks to me like they want signs to know when the temple will be destroyed as well as signs to know when Christ will take over Israel.

Jesus answer, and prophecy about the end times, is normally understood in one of four ways.

First some believe that **everything Christ is prophesying will take place and be done in 70 AD**. This is the **Preterist** view. These people believe that Christ returned in one sense already in 70 AD. They point to the nature of the question the disciples asked and what **they would have understood** as the answer. They also have some unusual historical evidence for natural disasters and oddities that happened during this period of History. They also believe that the book of Revelation describes what happened during that period of history. RC Sproul is probably one of the most popular scholars right now that holds this interpretation. I don't think he is right, but it is very interesting reading and he is far smarter than me.

Then there is the **Historicist** view. The historicist view interprets the symbols in the prophecies and the book of Revelation and matches the symbols to events that happened in various periods of history. So they see Revelation as referring to the **history** and **future** of the church as foretold with symbols. The symbols can often be understood by ways that they were used similarly in the Old Testament. For examples invading armies were often likened to locusts. So the locusts described in Revelation are describing invading armies. Mike leaned heavily in the Historicist interpretation of Revelation. So to understand Revelation **as a historicist**, one would have to thoroughly understand the Old Testament.

Then there is the **Futurist** view. This view holds that the book of Revelation should be interpreted literally. This is the view most of us have grown up with. Most of the popular tv preachers hold largely to this view. Their interpretations can get pretty spectacular, turning locusts into helicopters and the like. The biggest problem I have with a complete futurist view is that the book of Revelation was written in a known style called apocalyptic. That style was understood to use symbols that the reader would have known how to interpret. It seems to be cheating good interpretive rules to take a style known to be

symbolic and try to make it suddenly literal. It would be like taking all the physical descriptions of God to find out what God looks like. We would draw Him as having wings and a right arm that is bigger than His left and on and on.

The last view is the **idealist** view. This essentially reads prophecy as being a poetic sort of story. The idealist view would say Revelation is describing the battle between God and Satan in poetic, idealistic terms. I don't think that is likely because that sort of interpretation would give us no preparation to understand where we are in terms of history. Christ gave the signs that we could watch and understand in concrete terms. And idealistic approach wouldn't allow for that use of Revelation.

With all this said I would like to read something John MacArthur says. He is a futurist I think, but what he says would also back a historicist view. This is lengthy.

John MacArthur says this:

As Matthew's account indicates, *the disciples'* question was bigger than just an inquiry into the coming ruination and carnage at the temple. They wanted to know about the end of the present age.

***The* disciples (like other first-century Jews) envisioned only a single coming of the Messiah. But God intended the Messiah to come twice—once as the Suffering Servant (cf. [Isa. 53:1-12](#)) and again as the conquering King (cf. [Rev. 19:11-19](#))—with an extended period of time elapsing between His two advents. In order to help them understand that reality, Jesus gave His disciples a detailed reply to their question. In fact, the response found in [Mark 13](#) (and the parallel passages in [Matt. 24-25](#) and [Luke 21](#)) constitutes the longest recorded answer given by Jesus to any question He was asked. Clearly, the Lord intended it as vitally important truth for His followers to grasp.**

[Verse 5](#) marks the actual beginning of the Olivet Discourse, in which Jesus explained what would take place throughout the world, with a particular emphasis on those events that will immediately precede His return to earth. Having already predicted the imminent demolition of the temple and its operations ([v. 2](#)), Jesus shifted His focus to the distant future in [verses 5-37](#). Some interpreters (who deny that there will be a future earthly kingdom) insist that everything Jesus foretold in the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in a.d. 70, around the time of the temple's destruction. But such a concept is untenable for a number of reasons. First, the fact that Jesus used the figure of birth pangs ([13:8](#); cf. [1 Thess. 5:3](#)) indicates that He was speaking about the end of the church age, not the beginning. After all, labor pains do not occur throughout the entire pregnancy but only at the end. Since the destruction of the temple occurred early in church history, the figure of birth pangs could not apply to that event. Second, the Lord indicated that "the gospel must first be preached to all

the nations” ([v. 10](#)), something that clearly had not occurred by a.d. 70. Third, Jesus spoke about the “Abomination of Desolation” ([v. 14](#)), the ultimate desecration of the Antichrist in the temple during a period just before the second coming (cf. [Dan. 9:27](#); [11:31](#); [2 Thess. 2:4](#)). That event did not take place in a.d. 70, and in fact has not yet occurred. Fourth, the Lord also spoke of “a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will” ([v. 19](#)). Those words cannot refer to the destruction in a.d. 70, since they speak of a time when the calamity on earth will be worse than it has ever been in all of human history, even during the time of the flood (cf. [v. 20](#); cf. [Matt. 24:38](#)). Finally, Jesus identified heavenly signs that would accompany the end of the age, including the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars from heaven ([vv. 24-25](#)). Obviously, such cosmic catastrophes have not yet taken place. When they do, Jesus warned that those alive at that time should recognize that He is about to return ([v. 29](#)). As He explained, the generation that experiences those end-time events will be the same generation that is alive at the second coming ([v. 30](#)), meaning that all of the final cataclysms on earth will occur within the span of a single generation. Since nothing remotely like a global and cosmic upheaval of the magnitude described in the Olivet Discourse occurred in a.d. 70 nor yet in earth’s history, **the specific fulfillment of these universal judgments must still be future.**

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

I am not sure that Mr. MacArthur is right about his idea that **none** of what Christ said had to do with AD70 and the sacking of Jerusalem., but I do think he shows how **not everything** that Christ predicted could have been fulfilled in AD 70. At least some of it had to have been pointing to the future.

Now let’s start looking at Jesus’s answer. We won’t be able to look at it all this Sunday, but we will get started.

⁵ **And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many.**

Josephus tells us that this exact thing happened after Christ and before AD70. A lot of false Messiah’s arose. In fact the destruction of Jerusalem was due to the influence of one or more of these false Messiahs.

Now could this be one of those dual fold prophecies? I think it probably is. It was true in the time of the readers of this Gospel and it is even more true in the end times.

It always amazes me how we are so shocked and so taken back by the things that Christ said were sure to happen. He told us for sure there would always be **tares with the wheat**. There are always sure to be **wolves with the sheep**. There will always be **false with the true**. We **KNOW** it will happen. Christ **promises** it will

happen. Why do our worlds fall apart when it does? Surely it is disappointing and discouraging when we find out a person we **believed** to be true **isn't** true. And surely we hope for better for those we love. But really, should it come as such a shock that what Christ said **was sure to happen** happens? Of course it will happen. False and true always live in the same neighborhood. There are only two things that clear up that problem. Persecution and the final judgment. So we are going to have deceivers. They will claim to be Christians. They may even appear to be **way better Christians** than we are. After all, it wouldn't take much. We know ourselves. And we aren't all that wonderful, are we? So it is really easy for a pretender to come across as being way superior to us. The deception that Christ is speaking of here is a little easier to spot. This guy is saying, I am the Messiah. Yeah, our red flags would pop up all over the place, and rightfully so. For us, the deceivers who offer another superior path of spirituality are the greater dangers. So the warning that we take heed that no one deceives us is still very valid. We aren't likely to be deceived into following some false messiah yet, but we are highly likely to be deceived into following another method of spirituality, something that comes in an experiential package that makes us feel good. That is always a danger.

Now these false messiahs will increase at the end. Until the anti-Christ steps in as the best of the false messiahs.

⁷ **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.** ⁸ **For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.**

I hope we are getting this. This is the world future that God promises. God promises it. It will not, in any way, get any better for extended periods of time. There will not be world peace until we are under a world leader who cuts a deal for peace. And then it will be very temporary.

If you watch the news at all you see nations that desperately want a savior. We as humans want someone who can provide for us, can keep us safe, can keep food on our table, can keep our borders safe, can keep our globe from heating up too much, and on and on. But we are, like the songs says, looking for love in all the wrong places.

Global conflict is going to do only one thing. Increase. It will escalate until it is so bad we would rather welcome the devil himself to lead us than to put up with ourselves for one more day. That is the world future that we are headed to if the futurists are correct. Christ promises it.

Now in the midst of that conflict, what does Christ tell us to do?

Do Not Be Troubled. That word means **don't be troubled in mind**. Don't be frightened. Don't be alarmed.

Now let me ask you, is that a command or a suggestion?

If the God of the universe tells us we have no reason to be troubled in mind or alarmed when world conflicts continue, if He tells us not to get bent out of shape, even when acts of terrorism are hitting the US, what do we do? Do we get bent out of shape anyway and act like God doesn't really mean what He said? Or do we choose to trust Him with our precious selves? Really, we either trust Him or we don't. What is it with us?

This conflict is going to escalate. But that isn't proof of the end. It just proves we are **moving toward** the end.

I found this online- ***Out of 162 countries, 151 of the world's nations are currently involved in some form of conflict.***

Even more depressingly, the study from the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) shows that the world is getting progressively less peaceful since 2007.

Source: Express - UK

And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows.

Now we are getting somewhere.

As a matter of curiosity I got online and searched for the earthquake frequency. What I saw was a chart beginning in 1973 where there were 5000 earthquakes. In 2005 there were 30,000. Search it for yourself if you like. You will see pretty much a steady increase.

And people say they can't believe the Bible.....

I also did a search for famines. The results aren't as easily graphed but it is clear that there are a lot of famines worldwide.

So Jesus made it clear. There is going to be a lot of bad stuff going on across the globe. He does not intend to end suffering. It will surely escalate as the end of time approaches. So there will be external hardship and disaster.

Don't you find it interesting that those things that people use as evidence that **there is no God** is actually evidence that the **Bible is true**? They can see that God's word is right. They just don't like the author. A God who allows suffering is not tenable with their understanding of what God should be.

What else will happen?

⁹ But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.

Spiritual deceivers will increase.

Warfare will increase.

Earthquakes will increase.

Famine will increase.

And what else- Persecution of Christians will increase.

What Jesus tells these guys had to be very helpful to them. They were told what would happen to them personally. As well as anyone else listening who followed Christ would have known what was coming.

The first source of persecution was going to come from the Jews, from the experts in religion. They would first do to the Christians **what they had power to do**. They had the power to beat someone, to scourge them. But they did not have the power to kill.

For that, these leaders would need to deliver them to the civil leaders. And this was going to happen. A very clear example of this was Paul. It probably happened to other disciples as well, but we aren't given the details.

When we read this, we expect what it will say next because we have read this numerous times. But for these guys hearing it **for the first time**, this would have been difficult. Not only weren't they going to be **in power**, wouldn't they not only **not be calling the shots**, the big shots were going to use them as **their whipping boys**. Christ was telling them that they would be persecuted. They would be beat. Every fleshly reason for following Christ had just flown out the door. All hopes of being the big shots was now gone. The Jews will punish you. And then the Romans will punish you. Why? For the only reason worth dying for, for the gospel message penetrating every level of society. Christ is going to use His servants as His messengers to these lost people. And some of them would respond. The odds aren't going to be good, but God never seems worried about that. He will use them as a witness.

Do we see our lives this way? Do we see our lives as **for God to spend** to get His word wherever He wants it? Well that is what they are. We are blessed to have such a wonderful purpose in life. I have been watching the news. The famous celebrities are dropping like flies with drug overdoses. Why? Because they have been given everything the world offers and it isn't enough. They don't have a purpose that goes beyond this life. They don't have anything worth dying for so they don't have anything worth living for.

We do.

We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ to this lost and dying world. And they will eventually, if not now, kill us for that service. That is what Christ promised to His 11 favorites. We aren't likely to get any less.

We are just a little way into our text but we can see for sure that Christ is going to return. And when He returns He is going to separate the sheep from the goats, the believers from the unbelievers. It is very important that you have responded to Christ's call on your life before this happens. It is vital that you understand that the death that Jesus suffered, He suffered in your place. He was taking upon Himself your sin on that cross. He was taking upon Himself the wrath of God in your place. And now you are called to believe in Christ. You are called to respond

to what Christ did by saying, Yes Lord, I trust that what you did counted for Me. I believe that your sacrifice was adequate for my salvation. And I trust you this morning with all of me. I surrender to you the Lordship of my life because you have bought me at a tremendous price. Forgive me of my sins and I am hereby turning **from them to You**.

That is what it takes to be saved. That is what it takes to be right with God. Have you ever done that? That is business that cannot be left undone. Securing your soul in the love of Christ is the most important thing you can do on earth. Christ is coming back. Are you ready?