

Mark 13:1-13 “Labor Pains”

Stedmen... *The religious performance among these scribes and Pharisees had reached such an absurd state of affairs, Josephus tells us, that some of the Pharisees, before they made their contribution to the great collection box Jesus was watching here, actually summoned a trumpeter to go before them to get everybody's attention. Then the Pharisees would come up and proudly deposit a bag of gold in the treasury chest. He wanted everybody to see his ample gift.*

As G. Campbell Morgan once said, “Motive is everything in the Kingdom.”
WHEN ACTS OF WORSHIP ARE STAGED TO IMPRESS MAN THEY CEASE TO IMPRESS GOD.

Mark 12 verse 42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites,

She was living out the *Shema*, **loving God with all she had**. On this Passover she was silently saying to God, “I love you, and all I have is yours. Here’s my heart, my life.”

Men who do works so they will be seen by men receive the applause of men. Those who do works for God’s glory receive God’s smile. The reward for the latter is overwhelming – and always will be.

Jesus was so blessed by this poor widow’s gift. He gave her a place of honor not only in His eyes but in the eyes of the disciples. And not only in theirs but in every eye of every century that has ever read God’s Word and seen this act of worship.

PRAY

Prophecy is not to scare us but to warn us... **and it should comfort us!**

Chapter 13 records what is called Jesus’ Olivet Discourse, by far the most difficult passage in the book of Mark and, along with its parallels in the other Gospels, one of the most difficult texts in the New Testament.

The Olivet Discourse formed a fitting bridge to Jesus' final days. It was his final address, his farewell **prophecy**. Just a couple of days before He will give his life on the cross.

The Olivet Discourse deals with the Tribulation—the seven-year period This chapter will give us a look at the earth following the Rapture of the church. God will pour out His wrath on a rejecting and sinful earth. Verses 5–13 deal with the **beginning** of the Tribulation, 14–18 with the **middle**, and 19–27 with the **end**.

13 Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ***As to which disciple... We lay everything on Peter so why not... probably Peter said,***

"Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"
What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

↓ TEMPLE

The temple was considered one of the great wonders of the Roman world. Herod's rebuilding started in 19 B.C., and was not completed until 63 A.D., taking more than 80 years. The magnificent temple compound was finished only seven years before it was destroyed.

From a distance it looked like a mountain of gold, because its nine massive gates and much of its exterior was plated with gold and silver.

Valued at over one trillion dollars by today's standards, the temple was without a doubt the greatest single building ever constructed. With brass gates **130 feet high**, stones **40 feet** long and **20 feet** thick cut so perfectly that not even a knife blade could fit between them.

Josephus wrote:

The exterior of the building wanted nothing that could astound either mind or eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white.

This temple was originally rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Ezra (Ezra 6:15), but

greatly expanded and improved by Herod. It was the center of Jewish life for almost a 1000 years - so much so, that it was customary to swear by the temple (Matthew 23:16), and speaking against the temple could be considered blasphemy (Acts 6:13).

see what manner of stones and what buildings are here - is especially appropriate given the massive stones Herod used in building the temple. Today, tourists can see some of these massive stones, at least the ones used to build merely the retaining wall for the temple compound. These cut, quarried blocks of limestone are so big - some are 50 feet wide, 25 feet high, and 15 feet deep - that modern construction cranes could not lift them. Archaeologists are still not completely certain how these stones were cut, transported, and placed with such precision that they don't even need mortar.

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."

Some 40 years after Jesus said this, there was a widespread Jewish revolution against the Romans in Palestine, and the rebels enjoyed many early successes. But ultimately, **Rome crushed the Jews**. Jerusalem was leveled, including the temple - just as Jesus said.

*Remember this is why Jesus while riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday stopped and wept over the city... He saw this destruction coming as a result of their rejection this day of salvation.

As great as the temple was, Jesus never hesitated to claim that He was greater than the temple **Matthew 12 verse 6** "Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple." For Jews of that day, the temple had become an idol - it subtly began to mean more to the people than God Himself meant. **The temple was a good thing**, but good things can become the worst idols; and God is in the habit of destroying our idols.

It is said that at the fall of Jerusalem, the last surviving Jews of the city fled to the temple, because it was the **STRONGEST AND MOST SECURE** building. The Roman soldiers surrounded it, and one drunken soldier started a fire that soon engulfed the whole building. **Ornate gold detail work** in the roof melted down in the cracks between the stone walls of the temple, and to retrieve the gold, the Roman commander

ordered that the temple be **dismantled stone by stone**. The destruction was so complete that today, they have true difficulty learning exactly where the temple was.

Josephus, "Wars of the Jews" states "Now, as soon as the army had no more people to kill or plunder ... Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple... this was the end which Jerusalem came to." Interestingly, Josephus tells us that the Romans never *intended* to destroy the temple, but were driven to it by the fierceness of Jewish opposition and by accident. *Wars of the Jews, 6.4*

The literal fulfillment of this prophecy establishes the tone for the rest of the prophecies in the chapter. We should expect a literal fulfillment for these other prophecies also.

Join me in verse 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?"

HERE WE ARRIVE AT THE OLIVET DISCOURSE—paralleled in Matthew 24 and Luke 21—where the longest answer Jesus would ever give deals with end times and future events.

The **Mount of Olives** is a hill that rises above the temple mount. In between the temple mount and the **Mount of Olives** there is a small valley, the Kidron Valley. You can stand on the **Mount of Olives** and see a dramatic view of the temple mount.

Again verse 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?"

WHEN? **Never going to hear a date from me**... every generation thought they might be the last. I think that's ok. It's not about when **BUT ABOUT BEING READY.**

This question was asked perhaps as they remembered the events

surrounding the last temple's destruction: the temple was destroyed in the context of **national judgment and exile**. If the temple will be destroyed, then what will become of Israel and the Jews?

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.

History shows that in the first one hundred years after Jesus spoke these words, no less than 64 men came on the scene claiming to be Messiah. And we see a continuance of this today by those who propagate the age-old New Age lie that we all have a "God-consciousness" within us and are all, therefore, deity.

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. **Could "kingdom" speak of a return to monarchies? Very possibly.**

WILL DURANT WROTE: "War is one of the constants of history, and had not diminished with civilization and democracy. In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war."

Yet, no period has witnessed the escalation of wars as has the 20th Century. The Red Cross has estimated that over **100 million** people have been killed in wars since the 20th Century began. Up until 1914, war had never been universal, but in both World War 1 & 2, **total war was waged.**

Therefore, although generation after generation cries for peace, there cannot be true peace until the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, returns.

Finishing verse 7 And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. **These are the beginnings of sorrows.**

Earthquakes... Current Earthquake Statistics: USGS (U.S. Geological Survey) www.earthquake.usgs.gov

- 1863-1900 (38 Years) There were 12 Major Earthquakes Magnitude 6.99+
- 1901-1938 (38 Years) There were 53 Major Earthquakes Magnitude 6.99+
- 1939 -1976 (38 Years) There were 71 Major Earthquakes Magnitude 6.99+
- 1977-2014 (38 Years) As of September 2009 there have been 144 Major Quakes (6.99+) **predict >180 total**

Famines... A famine is a widespread scarcity of food, caused by several factors including **crop failure**, **overpopulation**, or government policies. This phenomenon is usually accompanied or followed by regional malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and increased mortality.

- Poverty
- Inappropriate social infrastructure
- A suppressive political regime
- A weak or under-prepared government
- Natural disasters, droughts, earthquakes, floods, tsunami's, tornados...

UN warns of food riots in developing world as drought pushes up prices

European dry spell and commodities speculation combine to push up average cereal costs by 71% to record levels

Pestilences... domino's when natural disasters come famine, then disease...

influenza is a world wide epidemic.

Yellow Fever in Senegal

Measles outbreaks: Regions of the Americas, Europe and Africa

Wild polio virus confirmed in China

West Nile Virus Infection (WNV) in Europe

Outbreak of illness in schools in Angola

These are the beginning of sorrows, or "labor pains."

Come on Pastor Mike. . .

"There has always been war and rumors of war." There have.

"But there have always been earthquakes," you say. And there have.

"There has always been famine," you say. There has.

BUT WHAT JESUS IS SAYING IS THAT, LIKE BIRTH PAINS, THESE THINGS WILL INCREASE IN FREQUENCY AND INTENSITY AS THE TRIBULATION PERIOD DRAWS NEARER.

As L.A. Marzulli says this is not business as "usual".

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

Jon Courson simplifies this... “Keep in mind that Jesus is speaking to Jews—as evidenced by His reference to synagogues. This distinction is important because the Rapture of the church does not need to wait until Christians are “delivered to councils,” or “brought before rulers.” Neither is it dependent upon the gospel being preached among all nations. Oh, the gospel will indeed be preached. But it will be by the 144,000 witnesses, by Elijah and Moses, by angels flying across the sky during the Tribulation. Referred to as *Jacob’s* trouble in Jeremiah 30, the Tribulation does not concern the church, but Israel.”

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. **Jesus speaks here of the inspiration that comes at a moment of persecution, not teaching in the church.** I love what **Robertson says regarding this**, “There is no excuse for the lazy preacher who fails to prepare his sermon out of the mistaken reliance upon the Holy Spirit.”

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. **The radical commitment which the gospel demands can disrupt even the most natural and sacred human relationships, and still does.**

During the Tribulation, Antichrist’s rule will be so pervasive that there will actually be children betraying their parents who follow Jesus Christ and refuse the mark of the beast. **Matthew 10:34-36** *Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’*

13 And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. **Spoken to those who become believers during the**

Tribulation, Jesus says, “There’s hope. Don’t give up in the times of tribulation. If you endure to the end, you’ll be saved.”

The Christian life is not a sprint, but a marathon.

Jesus sums it all up in one brief sentence right at the beginning,

And Jesus began to say to them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray."

Prophecy is not to scare us but to warn us... **and it should comfort us!**

To all those who read my notes... thank you! Thank you for loving God’s word enough to dig in. I pray they help you in your understanding of who our Savior is and help you in your desire to follow Him. God bless you as you continue to make Jesus look good!

Forever His, Pastor Mike