

MARK 13

THE END

We have reached chapter 13, which is one of the most misunderstood teachings in the entire book. Novelists have made millions off of this chapter. Cults are born out of this chapter. Apocalyptic nightmares come from this chapter. Prophesies about the end of the world & the rapture & the final coming of Christ come from this chapter. Several times in this chapter, Jesus speaks about “the end” (13:7, 13). Over the years, there have been countless individuals who have used the **Olivet Discourse** to predict the end of the world.¹ *Examples:*

- **Edgar C. Whisenant** – “*88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*” (1988)
A best-seller distributed by the millions, claiming the rapture would occur between September 11–13, 1988. When it didn’t happen, Whisenant published follow-ups (1989, 1993, 1994, etc.).
- **Harold Camping** – “*1994??*” (1992)
Camping predicted Christ’s return in September 1994. After that failed, he made another widely publicized prediction for May 21, 2011 (later moved to October 21, 2011).
- “*The Return of Jesus*” by **David L. Toney** (2025) — This is a recently published work that suggests the Second Coming will occur in **2032**.

Most recently, there was even a prophecy that went viral on social media predicting that the rapture would take place between **Sept. 23–24th, 2025**.

Like every generation, there are many people who see what is happening in the world around us and come to the conclusion that Jesus is returning any day: *a global pandemic, government shutdowns, massive global attention in Israel, Artificial Intelligence, microchipping, Apache helicopters, instant communication anywhere across on the planet, wars and rumors of the wars, dropping bombs on nuclear plants...* If you watch the news for any length of time, it can feel like we are living at the end of days. So, what does Jesus teach us about “the end” in **Mark 13**?

What I want to do with this chapter is to preach it over the course of two Sundays:

1. What did Jesus’s message mean to His original audience? **CONTEXT**
2. What does Jesus’s message mean to us today? **IMPLICATIONS**

How should Christians read Mark 13 in 2025? I want to suggest that we start by folding up the newspaper, putting down the phone, and turning off the TV as we read this chapter. In other words, we need to stop reading it through the lens of modern-day events and start by reading it in its **historical context**. We need to ask **contextual questions** like: *Who is Jesus talking to? What is the immediate setting of this passage? What prompted this teaching? Is Jesus responding to a specific question, or is He speaking into the abstract? How would His original audience have understood this message?* Before we rush to the question of how this passage applies to us today, we need to ask what it meant to those who were listening to Jesus then?

Context: 13:1–4

- The disciples comment on the architecture of “the temple” (13:1)
- “Great buildings” of the temple (13:2)
 - They were looking at some of the largest building stones ever used in the ancient world.
 - **Stones** used for the walls were at least 10 feet long, 3 feet high, and 6 feet deep – weighing at least 40,000 pounds (they could weigh as much as 100,000 pounds). The largest stone would have equaled the weight of roughly 30 fully loaded semi-trucks (weighing well over a million pounds).

¹ **William Miller** (1782–1849) – published tracts predicting Christ’s return in 1843–1844.

Hal Lindsey – “*The Late Great Planet Earth*” (1970). Lindsey suggested that a “generation” from Israel’s 1948 rebirth pointed to the 1980s as the time of Christ’s return.

Colin Deal – “*Christ Returns by 1988*” (1979)

- And then Jesus drops a bombshell onto the conversation by speaking of the destruction of the temple (13:2) – which is something that would have been nearly impossible to fathom.
- Jesus led the disciples out of the temple, going east to “the Mount of Olives” (13:3) – which is why His teaching in this chapter is called “*The Olivet Discourse.*”²
 - Why is this significant? It’s significant because we have seen this movement from God before. Jesus is reenacting what happened in **Ezekiel 10–11**, where we read that “*the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city*” (Ezek 11:23). It’s the picture of imminent judgment against Jerusalem. Babylon broke through the walls, burned the temple of Solomon to the ground, and carried the people away.
- And now, here on the mountain east of the temple, Jesus has a private conversation with His Jewish disciples (13:3).
- The question that the disciples ask Jesus is about timing of the destruction of the temple (13:4). “*These things*” = the destruction of the temple (13:2). They aren’t asking about the destruction of the cosmos; they are asking about the destruction of the temple.
- And so, starting in verse 5, Jesus begins to answer their question about the destruction of the temple (13:5).

Why is the destruction of **the temple** so important? Because it was **the heartbeat of the Old Covenant Jewish religion**. The White House in Washington D.C. doesn’t even come close to comparing to the significance of the temple. It was the visible dwelling place of the glory of God.³ It was the center of their sacrificial system.⁴ It was the place they would go to worship. It was the focal point of Judaism.⁵

Signs that the Destruction of the Temple is Near

- Many deceivers will come claiming to be the Christ (13:5–6). The ancient historian Josephus writes that there were “*many imposers and deceivers*” in the years after Christ (*especially during the 60’s*).⁶
- Wars and rumors of wars (7).
 - Can we just be honest and say that this sign would not be an impressive sign today! Imagine that I made a prophetic prediction, and you asked for a sign, and I said, “*There will be wars and rumors of wars.*” You would say, “*Well, that’s not impressive; there have been wars and rumors of wars constantly for the past 2,000 years.*” And you would be right: it’s not an impressive sign today. You know when it would have been an impressive sign? When Jesus gave it to His disciples. Why? Because they were living in a period known as **the Pax Romana** (Roman Peace) which lasted for approximately two centuries (27 BC – 180 AD). Saying that there would be wars and rumors of wars during the Pax Romana would have been hard to fathom.
 - And you’ll never guess what began to happen in Jerusalem less than a decade later: rumors of war.⁷
- Nation will rise against nation (8)
 - Again, not impressive today – but it would have been impressive then.
- Earthquakes. Famines. Troubles. These are “*the beginnings of sorrows*” (8).
 - You’ll never guess what we read about in **Acts 11:28**? “*A great famine over all the world*” in the days of Claudius (AD 45–48). Ancient historians (Josephus, Tacitus, etc.) also speak of famines across the empire. Historians also speak of catastrophic earthquakes throughout the world. In fact, one of the most famous earthquakes in the ancient world took place in Laodicea just 30 years later (AD 60–61).⁸

² Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21.

³ Exod 25:8–9; 1 Kings 8:10–13.

⁴ Lev 16:15–17; Heb 9:1–9.

⁵ Deut 12:5–6.

⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.8.6; *War* 2.13.4. We also read about some of these deceivers in Acts (5:36; 8:9–11; 21:38).

⁷ Rumors of Parthian invasions and wars in the east (AD 36–66). Rumors of war when Caligula tried to set up his statue in the temple (AD 40). Rumors of the Boudiccan rebellion (AD 60–61). Roman Civil Wars (AD 68–69). See also Acts 5:36–37; 21:38.

⁸ Tacitus (*Annals* 14.27).

- Delivered to councils, beaten in synagogues... (9).⁹
- “And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations” (10).
 - Two really significant things happened in the first generation of the church that we read about in the book of Acts:
 - At Pentecost, Jews “from *every nation under heaven*” heard the message of the gospel (Acts 2:5, 38–39, 41).
 - Persecution arose against the church, and so the Christians began to migrate into other parts of the world (Acts 8:1; 11:19) – bringing the gospel of Jesus with them.
 - And then the apostles began venturing on their own missionary journeys (13:3–4).
 - By the time the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the church in Colosse (c. AD 60–62), he can say that the gospel of Jesus has come to “*all the world*” (Col 1:5–6), that it has been “*preached to every creature under heaven*” (1:23).
 - Now, we’ll come back to this verse next week, but (for now) I just want you to see that the apostle Paul said that this sign was accomplished in the 1st century.
- You will be persecuted for your faith – it will tear apart your families; you’ll be hated, arrested, interrogated (11–13). Following Jesus will cost you something. But those who “endure to the end will be saved” (13).
 - We hear this call to “endure” all over the NT¹⁰ - which tells us that following Jesus won’t be easy. We aren’t told to endure easy things (e.g., *laying on a beach*); we are called to endure hard things (e.g., *working out, giving birth*). Following Jesus will be a hard thing.
 - But the promise that God gives us in His Word is that all who belong to Him (through faith in Christ) will endure. “**He Will Hold Me Fast.**”¹¹
- Talking to His disciples, He said that they would see the “*abomination of desolation*” (13:14). What is that? This phrase comes from the book of Daniel where he was prophesying about the temple being desecrated and then destroyed.¹² Daniel prophesies of an invading army coming in and desolating the temple, and this is exactly how Luke describes the “*abomination of desolation*” when he records this teaching of Jesus. He says that “abomination of desolation” is “*Jerusalem surrounded by armies*” (Luke 21:20). And Jesus, speaking to His disciples, says, “*You will see this happen*” (13:14).
 - Forty years after Jesus gave this sermon, this exact thing happened: Jerusalem was surrounded by Roman armies. They brought their *standards* (*which was a military banner that depicted their idols and were seen as objects of worship*) into the temple – which was an abomination to the Jews, and then (in AD 70) they destroyed the temple.
 - And when the ancient historian **Josephus** described the destruction of the temple in his historical book (*The Jewish War*), he said that Rome burned the temple completely and then leveled it until there was not one stone of the sanctuary left upon another, and “*there was left nothing to make those that came to it believe that it had ever been inhabited*”¹³ – which brings us back to exactly what Jesus said would happen in 13:2.
- And then Jesus gives a very specific word to His disciples: He says, “*When you see the abomination of desolation*” (which Luke says is Jerusalem surrounded by armies), then let those who are in *Judea* flee to the *mountains*. He’s talking to a group of Jewish people living in Judea. He says, “*When you see Jerusalem sounded by armies, get out of town. Don’t run back home to grab your belongings*” (15–16). The message is to get out of town fast, which isn’t easy if you’re pregnant.¹⁴ Moving quickly is not easy if you have little ones. It’s not easy when it’s in the middle of winter (17–18). All of this is to say that when they see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, there is absolutely no time to waste in getting out.
 - Josephus tells us that **1.1 million Jews** were slaughtered when Rome captured the city, and an additional 97,000 were taken captive.

⁹ See Acts 4:1–7; 5:40; 22:19; 23–28.

¹⁰ Matt 24:13; Heb 3:14; Col 1:22–23.

¹¹ John 6:37–40; 10:27–29; Rom 8:29–30, 38–39; Eph 1:13–14; Phil 1:6; Heb 7:25; 1 Pet 1:3–5; Jude 24–25.

¹² Daniel 9:26–27; 11:31; 12:11.

¹³ *Jewish War* 6.4.5; 7.1.1.

¹⁴ Liz and I walk together almost every day, and I can tell you that women who are about to give birth do not move very fast.

- Where were the Christians when Jerusalem was under siege? Not in Jerusalem. Why? Because they took Jesus' word literally and fled to Pella the mountains of Perea.¹⁵
- “In those days...” (19) In what days? In those days... (e.g., the days of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies and the temple being destroyed)... “in those days there will be tribulation...” This is often referred to as “the Great Tribulation” – and for good reason. Jesus says that it will be unlike anything that this world has ever seen before (19–20).
 - And this is exactly how historians describe what took place during that time.
- Again, false messiahs (christs) and false prophets will arise and deceive many (21–22).
- “But take heed: see, I have told YOU all things beforehand” (23).
- “In those days” (same time period), the heavens are going to explode with catastrophic wonders: the sun and the moon will go dark, and the stars will fall (24–25).
 - This is where people today point to some future event (*like blood moons, meteor showers, solar eclipses*). But, here again, we are reading the Bible through our contemporary lenses instead of reading it through the eyes of a 1st century Jew who knew the Bible.
 - Jesus is not giving a weather report! He is using the **cosmic** imagery of OT prophets to describe the total collapse of the city, the temple, and the OC system. He isn't giving an astronomy lesson; He's giving an apocalyptic prophesy that is identical to the OT prophets.
 - **Isaiah 13:10** = judgement on Babylon
 - **Ezekiel 32:7** = judgement on Egypt
 - This is a prophetic way to say that God is going to “turn your lights off!”
- “Then THEY will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory” (26).
 - I think that when most modern-day readers read this, we think of what the sky looks like when the sunrays are piercing through the clouds.¹⁶ What we fail to consider is that (1) Jesus was speaking to a Jewish audience (2) in response to their question about the destruction of the temple, (3) using cosmic imagery that they were already familiar with. His audience knew their Bible, and so they were well-acquainted with this prophesy in the book of **Daniel** (7:13–14). Again, this was not meant to be a CNN weather report (e.g., we are waiting for a cloudy day for Jesus to return); it's an image that OT writers used to describe judgment (think: *storm clouds, lightning, thunder, noise, darkness, torrential downpour*).¹⁷ In other words, when these disciples heard Jesus say this, they aren't thinking about a secret rapture; they are thinking about the Lord coming in judgment on the temple, on Jerusalem, and on the whole Jewish religious system – because the Messiah had come, and they had rejected Him.
- “And then He will send His angels [messengers], and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven” (27).
 - What does this sound like? It sounds very similar to the **Great Commission** that Jesus gave to the church.
 - “You will be my witnesses [messengers]...to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
 - “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).
 - “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matt 28:19).
 - Again, we'll talk about this more next week.
- “This generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (28–30).
 - **Skeptics** of Christianity have long used this chapter as an attack against the credibility of Jesus and His Word: “Look, no cataclysmic events in the sky, no second coming...and that entire generation passed away centuries ago!”
 - We have three options when it comes to this passage:
 - Either Jesus was a liar, and the critics are right.
 - Jesus was actually talking about some future event that hasn't happened yet.
 - Or everything that Jesus said would happen *in that generation* DID HAPPEN *in that generation*.

¹⁵ Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5.3

¹⁶ When I was a child, every time I saw sunrays piercing through the clouds, I started looking for a white horse!

¹⁷ Ps 18:7–12; cf. 2 Sam 22:8–12; Isa 19:1; Ezek 30:3–4, 18; Joel 2:1–2; Nah 1:3.

- The problem with the skeptics and the professing Christians would attempt to interpret this passage as some future event (*with bomber planes, helicopters, microchips, nuclear bombs, and mushroom clouds*) is that we are imposing our newspaper theology into the text. But, if we read this passage the way it would have been heard by 1st century Jewish ears, then this passage becomes a whole lot easier to understand! Jesus is using OT imagery that His disciples would understand to talk about a coming destruction (of the temple and of Jerusalem) that would take place in their generation... which is EXACTLY what happened in AD 70.
- The world as they knew it passed away, but the words of Jesus will never pass away (**31**).
- Still speaking of the destruction of the temple (and Jerusalem) Jesus says that no one knows the day or hour that this would take place (**32**).
 - More next week!
- Therefore, He called them to stay awake. Watch. Be ready. When the Lord returns in judgment, don't be found sleeping. Don't get complacent. Don't get apathetic. Don't get lazy. "What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (**33-37**).
 - Dream: preaching to a building full of sleeping people in their sleeping bags.

APPLICATION

When you hear that this chapter has actually nothing to do with us or with events that are going to take place in our future, our natural tendency is to ask, "*Well, then what's the point!? Why should I care about all these warnings if they don't even apply to me?!*"

1. **The Bible is not about you.** It's not about me. It's not about America. **It's about Christ Jesus.** We are not the center of this story; Jesus is. We call it history because it's HIS STORY. This is true, even when it comes to the book of Revelation. Did you know that Revelation is not a book about the end times? It's amazing how many people think that Revelation is a book that was intended to give us a roadmap of the end of the world when the author tells us exactly what the book is about in the very first sentence: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place...*" (**Rev 1:1**). (1) The revelation (singular) is not about the end of the world; it's about Jesus Christ; and (2) the things that we see happening throughout the revelation will happen soon – not 2,000 years in the distant future.
2. **It shows us that Jesus knows the future.** He knows the future of the world, and He knows the future of your life. He is not caught off guard by what is going on in your life or in the world around us. He declares the end from the beginning.
3. **God keeps His Word.** What He says will happen...will happen – how He says it will happen and when He says it will happen. When things aren't happening the way we think they should happen, the problem isn't with God or with His Word, the problem is with us. His Word is sure. You can trust Him with your heart, with your life, with your past, with your future, with your eternity. **He won't fail you.** Not today. Not tomorrow. Not for all eternity.

God is who He says He is. And He will do what He says He will do. This is His Story. He is the Author. And in His sovereign grace, He has brought us into His Story. And we'll look more at what that means next Sunday.

LET'S PRAY

MARK 13

THE END

Part TWO

CONTEXT: Last week, on the Lord's Day, we looked at Mark 13 through a historical lens. We talked about how many people have tried to interpret this chapter as a prophetic description about the end of the world, but as we read the chapter in its historical context, we saw how Jesus was speaking very specifically about the destruction of the temple that would happen within that generation. And then we talked about how everything that Jesus said would happen **DID** happen within a single generation. His prophesy came true **HOW** He said it would and **WHEN** He said it would. So, we closed the message by focusing on the fact that God always keeps His Word. When things aren't happening the way we think they should happen, the problem isn't with God or with His Word, the problem is with us. His Word is sure. His Word never fails. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but His Words will by no means pass away" (Mark 13:30). You can trust Him with your heart, with your life, with your past, with your future. **He won't fail you.** Not today. Not tomorrow. Not for all eternity.

Today, I want to go back & look at five things that we can take from this chapter and apply to our lives today.

1. **SCRIPTURE:** when we read a chapter (like Mark 13) which isn't about us, it reminds us that **the Bible is not about us.** It's not about you, not about me. It's not about America. **It's about Christ.**

We are not the center of this story; Jesus is. We call it **history** because it's **HIS STORY.** This is true, even when it comes to the book of Revelation. Did you know that Revelation is **not** a book about the end times? It's amazing how many people think that Revelation is a book that was intended to give us a roadmap of the end of the world...when the author tells us exactly what the book is about in the very first sentence: "**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place..." (Rev 1:1). (1) How many revelations are in this revelation? One. The revelation (singular) is not about the end of the world; it's about Jesus Christ; and (2) John says that the things we see happening throughout the revelation will "shortly take place" – not 2,000 years in the distant future.

The Bible is not about us, but it was written for our learning (**Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16–17**). It unveils the heart of God. In it, we see what God has done. In it, we hear the good news of our salvation. It exposes the sinfulness of our hearts and holiness of our God. It reveals Christ and His supremacy over all things. It is the window through which we see God. Our world doesn't need more mirrors; we need windows. The Word of God is not meant to be a mirror in which we can admire our goodness or loath our badness; it's a window through which we see the glory of God in the person of Christ.

2. **TRIBULATION:** the message is not about "*escapism*"; it's about "*endurance*" (**Mark 13:13**).

Nowhere in the gospels does Jesus offer words of comfort by telling His followers that He will protect them from tribulation. We are eternally protected from His wrath because Jesus covered us with His righteousness on the cross – like the mother hen laying over her chicks to protect them from the fire. We will not experience the wrath of God, but we will experience tribulation – and the promise that God gives us in His Word is that He will be with us in the midst of tribulation.¹⁸ Jesus does not prepare His people for an escape from tribulation; He prepares His people to endure tribulation with God-sized promises like "*I will never leave you and never forsake you*" (**Heb 13:5**); "*My grace is sufficient for you*" (**2 Cor 12:9**); "*these momentary afflictions are producing an eternal weight of glory*" (**2 Cor 4:17**).

The idea of a secret rapture is utterly foreign to the Bible. Not only does the word never show up in the Bible, but the concept itself does not show up. The idea of a rapture comes from interpreting Scripture with a *contemporary* lens rather than a *contextual* lens. The two big passages for "*rapture theology*" are **Matt**

¹⁸ Ps 23; John 16:33.

24:40–41 and **1 Thess 4:16–17**. We aren't going to look at those passages this morning, but we covered those passages in our End Times podcast this past week. The hope that we have in Christ is not that He will snatch us out of our tribulations, but that He will be with us in the midst of every tribulation; He is sovereign over our tribulation, and He is at work in the midst of our tribulation for His glory and for our everlasting good.

3. **GREAT COMMISSION:** the message of the gospel belongs to “*all the nations*” (**Mark 13:10**).

Jesus tells them that, before the temple is destroyed, “*the gospel must first be preached to all the nations*” (13:10). We hear something similar in the command that Jesus gives at the end of Mark’s Gospel when He tells His followers to “*go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (**Mark 16:15**). In the Great Commission in Matthew’s Gospel, we hear Jesus tell His followers to “*Go...and make disciples of all the nations*” (**Matt 28:18–20**). The good news of Jesus was never intended to stay local – to be horded by a particular people or contained within a particular place; from the very beginning, the gospel of God was meant to penetrate every corner of the globe. Jesus tells His disciples that He will not come in judgment on the temple until the gospel was preached to all the world, and **the great commission** was the final word to His disciples before He ascends to His throne in glory: *make disciples of all the nations*.

What does this mean for us today? It means that we are called to be a missional church. This is why the very first thing you see when you enter our building is a map of the nations. This is why the final phrase in our mission statement is about “*pursuing the nations*” with the Word of God. If we are not prayerfully, intentionally, strategically pursuing the nations with the gospel of Jesus – we are not doing what God has called us to do. When it comes to the work of pursuing the nations, there are only three kinds of people in the world: (1) those who are going, (2) those who are sending, and (3) those who are disobedient. We have the message of gospel, and it belongs to “*all the nations*”; it’s our calling to give it to them – which is what we hear in **verse 27** where Jesus says that He will send His angelos (ἄγγελος). What does this word mean? It means “*messenger*.” Sometimes, these messengers are angelic (*like Gabriel coming to Mary*); and sometimes, these messengers are humans (*like John the Baptist and the pastors of the churches in Revelation 2–3*).¹⁹

What are “*the four winds*” of “*earth*” and “*heaven*”? It is OT imagery depicting how far God has scattered His people across the globe. We see this exact language in places like **Zech 2:6** where God says to His people, “*I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven*.²⁰ In their rebellion, God had spread them across the globe like the four winds of heaven, and in His redemption, He has now sent His messengers out “*to gather His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven*.²¹”

How can I get involved in the work of the Great Commission?

1. **Pray**

- a. Pray for the lost.
- b. Pray that the light of the gospel would continue to penetrate into the deepest, darkest corners of the earth.
- c. Pray for those who have left everything behind for the sake of bringing the good news of Jesus to those who have never even heard the name of Jesus.
- d. Pray that God would raise up missionaries from among us.

2. **Go**

- a. Start by going into your community (*barber, gas station attendant, neighbor*)
- b. Consider going on a short-term mission trip (North Carolina) – Feb. 2026
- c. Surrender your life and future to God...what if He called you to “go”?!!??!

3. **Support & Encourage**

- a. How can you be a source of encouragement to those who have devoted their lives to the ministry of the gospel?

¹⁹ Matt 11:10.

²⁰ See also Deut 30:4.

4. **WATCH:** *The last word in this chapter is not just to His disciples then, but it's to us today.*

“**And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!**” (13:37). What does this mean? It means don’t fall asleep. Don’t close your eyes. Fight against passivity and apathy when it comes to the Word of God. Stay alert. Stay vigilant.

Our world is dark, and we have an enemy that lurks in the darkness. He seeks to lull our souls to sleep with endless entertainment, endless amusement, and endless comforts. We have an enemy who seeks to steal our joy, kill our faith, and destroy our testimony...and the easiest way to do this is **not** through persecution (*the church has always thrived during persecution*). No, the easiest way to steal, kill, and destroy is through mindless distractions and the pursuit of comfort. When we are distracted...and comfortable...is when we go to sleep.

A year ago, I was in a head-on car crash because the driver of the other vehicle was distracted by her phone and didn’t see the right light. Her primary task was the road in front of her, but she was distracted – and her distraction hurt people. And now, I’m quick to point fingers at her, but then I do the same thing in my calling as a Christian all the time. My primary task is this narrow road, but I get distracted by 10,000 other things (and then I get comfortable in my distractions), and the results are...costly.

“**And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!**” Brothers and sisters, there is a spiritual awakening taking place across our country right now, and I long to be part of it. I long for our church to be part of it. I long to see lost people get saved, I long to see hearts trapped in addiction find freedom, broken relationships being restored, people who were living for themselves surrender their lives to King Jesus. I want us as a church to be used by God in this way, but that means we have to stay awake to what God is saying and what He is doing. “**And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!**” Don’t go to sleep. Stay in the Word. Stay in community. Stay in prayer. And watch what God does in our midst for His glory and for our joy.

And that brings us to the 5th and final thing that I want for us to look at this morning (which is also what is going to lead us into the Lord’s table) and that is “*the God-ness and the Human-ness of Jesus.*”

5. **DIVINITY & HUMANITY of CHRIST:** fully God and fully Man (Mark 13:32).

In **Mark 13:32**, we hear Jesus say that the Son does not know the day or the hour when these events are going to take place. This has been a troubling passage to many Christians: *if Jesus is God, how can there be something that He does not know?* The answer is: *because of the miracle of the incarnation, Jesus is both fully God and fully human.*

As God, He knows the future. He declares the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10). As Man, He took on our humanness and the things that accompany our humanness (John 1:1, 14). He took on our pain, our grief, our sickness, our fatigue, our bodily needs for food and drink and sleep...²¹ And the apostle Paul speaks of Jesus humbling Himself by letting go of His equality with God; He “emptied” Himself so that He might truly identify with His people in our humanness (Phil 2:5–8). His glory was veiled.²² He laid aside His divine rights and privileges as the Creator of the universe.²³ As human, He refrained from exercising His “omni” attributes. As God, He is **omnipresent** (*present everywhere*); but as human, He was limited to be in one place at a time. As God, He is **omnipotent** (*all powerful*); but as human, He was voluntarily experienced our weaknesses. As God, He is **omniscient** (*all knowing*); but as human, He surrendered that divine right.²⁴

This is a beautiful theme that we see in Mark 13 where **both** His God-ness **and** His human-ness are on display. We see His **God-ness** in that He declares with prophetic certainty what will happen in the future,

²¹ Heb 2:14.

²² John 17:5; Isa 53:2; Phil 2:7.

²³ 2 Cor 8:9; John 1:10–11.

²⁴ Luke 2:52; John 5:19

how it will happen, and when it will happen. Yet, we see His **human-ness** in that He did not know the day or the hour in which these events would come to pass. The incarnation of Christ is the deepest of all mysteries in the Bible. We can talk about it, but we can never fully comprehend it. Ultimately, we celebrate it because it is our only means of salvation. Think about this with me...

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?

In the Garden of Eden, sin brought death into the human life that God had created (Gen 2:17). When God created Adam and Eve, they lived in perfect fellowship with their Creator—no sin; no death. But through Adam's rebellion, that relationship was broken and taken from God. Our sin took something from God.

Justice demands restitution: what was taken must be repaid. **For example**, *if you steal a quarter from me, justice is not satisfied until you give me a quarter in return for the one you stole*. In Luke 3:38, Adam is referred to as a “son of God” in the sense that he was the first human being who was created in God’s image, and humanity’s sin resulted in the death of this son of God. This sinless son was taken from God and put to death because of humanity’s sin, and so justice demands that God take a sinless son from us in death. Life for life.

In order for humanity to brought back into right relationship with God, justice demands the sacrificial death of a sinless man. The problem is that this is an impossible situation: (1) it’s impossible for us because “*we all sin and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23) – there are no sinless humans; and (2) it’s impossible for God because He cannot be put to death. God cannot die; and humans are sinners by nature.

This is the miracle of Christmas! In His incarnation, the eternal Son of God came to earth and was conceived in the womb of a virgin woman through the power of the Holy Spirit so that He could also be the Son of Man: **fully God** so that He could live a sinless life, and **fully human** so that He could be put to death. There on the cross, a sinless Son of Man was offered to God in death, satisfying the justice of God. The staggering reality of this gift is that God Himself was the one who paid our debt. God the Father gave us the Son that we offered back to Him on the cross. Justice was served, and God Himself was the one who paid the price.

This is why the cross is the symbol of the Christian story. There on the cross, the Son willingly sacrificed His life to satisfy the justice of Almighty God (Heb 12:2). And as His broken body hung upon that cross, His blood wasn’t the only thing flowing from His wounds. It was there, on that cross, that mercy and grace flowed down to all the nations.

The cross exposes the heart of God in every way. There, at the cross, we see His holiness (He cannot simply ignore our sin). We see His justice (He does not let the wicked go free). And we His mercy and grace (in that we get the salvation that we do not deserve because God Himself took the punishment that we do deserve). We see the depths of His love (in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us).

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. That’s the gospel. And it’s what brings us to the table today.

PRAY

OTHER END TIMES QUESTIONS...

- Who is the Antichrist? *Anyone who rejects King Jesus and teaches a different gospel.*
 - 1 John 2:18 || “many antichrists” – “the last hour”
 - 1 John 2:22 || anybody who denies the Father and the Son
 - 1 John 4:2–3 || now in the world already
 - 2 John 1:17 || the deceiver and the antichrist
- Who is the Beast?
- What is the mark of the beast?

RAPTURE THEOLOGY:

- **Matt 24:40–41** || Jesus’ audience would have thought about the judgment that took place in the story of Noah where the wicked were the ones who were taken, and the righteous were the ones who remained (24:37–39). They wouldn’t have thought about a secret rapture; they would have thought about massive destruction in which the wicked were destroyed and those who obeyed God remained – which is exactly what happened in AD 70 when over 1 million Jews were destroyed by the Roman army, while the Christians remained because they obeyed the voice of the Lord by going to the mountains instead of the city. In other words, it’s not about the righteous being taken away; it’s about the wicked being taken away; and it’s not about something that is going to happen in a great tribulation in the future; it’s about something that already happened in the great tribulation in AD 70.
- **1 Thess 4:16–17** || Paul’s readers would have immediately thought of a victory procession, not a secret rapture. They would have immediately thought of the ancient custom where citizens go out to meet their returning king and escort him back into the city – like what the people did when Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey. And the image of meeting the Lord “in the air” is because Jesus isn’t returning from the west or from the south; He is returning to earth from His Father’s throne in glory. And so the image of meeting Him and escorting Him back only works “in the air.”

THE BEAST

- It was “*a beast rising up out of the sea*” (13:1).
 - **General** terms: the sea was evil
 - **Specific**: the sea of the Roman world was the Mediterranean Sea.
- It was a beast “*having seven heads*”
 - Rome was well known as being the City on Seven Hills.
- Having “*ten horns*”
 - Horns were well-known in the ancient world as the symbol of power
 - Ten is well-known in the Bible as a number of completion/wholeness within a governing system – while seven often represents spiritual perfection (e.g., creation).
 - Ten Commandments (Exod 20) = complete moral law
 - Ten Plagues (Exod 7–12) = complete judgment on Egypt
 - Ten Virgins (Matt 25) = whole company of professing believers
 - Tithing (10%) = representing God’s rightful claim over the whole of what we have
 - Rome was the Beast, and there was a completeness to its power in the 1st Century world.
- Also “*seven kings...*” (17:9–11)
 - This speaks of the seven emperors, five leading up to the time that John was writing this, one who existed while John was writing, and one who would reign a short time after the current ruler.
 - Nero was the current emperor. The current king of this multi-headed beast.
- “Given authority to continue for forty-two months” (13:5)

- Roman emperors demanded titles like “*Lord and God*” (*Dominus et Deus*), “*Savior of the world*,” and “*Son of God*.” ~ fulfilling the image of the little horn in Daniel 7:8, 25.
- Nero persecuted the Christians for approximately 3 ½ years (42 months) from Nov AD 64 to June AD 68
- “He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword” (13:10)
 - In AD 68, Nero committed suicide (assisted suicide) by the sword.
- Mortally wounded and healing... (13:3)
 - Upon Nero’s death, a chaotic civil war ripped across the empire, and (from a 1st century perspective) the empire appeared to be over. Done. Mortally wounded. But then Vespasian seized control and restored stability.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

The Mark of the Beast is on everyone who rejects the lordship of King Jesus.

The “mark” of the beast (Rev 13:16–17) is the liturgical opposite of the “seal” of God (Rev 7:3; 14:1). Those who have surrendered their lives to King Jesus are sealed by God (Eph 1:13–14; 4:30). Those who have surrendered their allegiance to the world are marked as belonging to the world. We see this same imagery in the Old Testament when God’s people were told to have His Word written as it were on their forehead (i.e., their thoughts) and on the hands (i.e., their actions). Later Jewish tradition took this command literally (e.g., phylacteries), but the immediate audience understood the this “sign” as symbolic imagery: they were to be “marked” as a people whose thoughts and actions were shaped by the Word of God. The mark of beast is the counterfeit of Deuteronomy 6.

The question is not whether you will be marked, but whose mark you will bear. Every person is “marked” either as bondservant of Christ or as a slave to their sin.

How does a spiritual seal keep people from buying or selling? The answer to that question undoubtedly plays out differently throughout the different seasons of church history, but (here’s my argument) the “buying and selling” language simply describes the economic fallout that often accompanies a refusal to bow to the idolatry of world.

In the immediate context of Revelation (1st century Roman Empire), every city had imperial temples where citizens received a certificate showing that they had confessed (along with all the demanded pomp) that “Caesar is Lord.” Refusing to confess the lordship of Caesar resulted in being barred from local commerce (i.e., no buying or selling). In other words, the mark was a spiritual reality that resulted in visible social consequences. And the same pattern has continued at various times and places throughout church history whenever earthly powers insisted on the loyalty that belongs to Christ alone.

During the Roman Catholic persecutions in England (16th–17th centuries), those who refused to attend mass were often fined, imprisoned, or stripped of property. In the 20th century, Christians in communist countries (e.g., China, North Korea, Soviet Union) who refused to join a state-sanctioned church lost access to government jobs, food rations, and even property ownership. In many Muslim-majority countries (under sharia law), faithful Christians are regularly losing business licenses and employment opportunities. In some countries (e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.) Christians are not allowed to rent shops or buy land.

In our Western context today, one could argue that this same principle manifests itself in the overwhelming number of establishments that actively promote godlessness, resulting in the alienation of Christians who cannot in good conscious do business at such places. This is actually an ongoing conversation that some of our pastors have been having in recent days: when it seems like every major business is in bed with idolatrous ideologies and godless funding, is it right for Christians to continue patronizing such

establishments? Perhaps, refusing to do business with such companies is akin to the first century Christians refusing to burn incense to Caesar – thus, excluding them from the majority of economic options.

We are also all familiar with the small business owners (e.g., florists, bakers, photographers, etc.) who have been fined, ostracized, or shut down in recent years for refusing to affirm the godless ideologies within our culture. One such example just crossed my desk yesterday evening.

In other words, I'm arguing that this “buying and selling” imagery is a historical pattern that repeats itself whenever worldly powers demand ultimate allegiance.

666

- Rev 13:18
 - Wisdom & understanding
 - Number of the beast = Rome/Nero
 - The number of a “person”
 - Six hundred sixty six.
- Numbers also represent numbers, which means that a name can be counted.
- Across the eastern half of the Roman Empire (the churches of Rev 2–3), Nero’s name was normally written as Νέρων Καῖσαρ (Neron Kaisar). In Hebrew (the language of the Jewish people), his name would be spelled:

Greek	Hebrew	Letter Name	Numerical Value
N (N)	נ (nun)	<i>nun</i>	50
E (E)	ר (resh)	<i>resh</i>	200
R (P)	ו (vav)	<i>vav</i>	6
Ō (Ω)	ׁ (final nun)	<i>nun sofit</i>	50
K (K)	ׂ (qoph)	<i>qoph</i>	100
A (A)	ׁ (samekh)	<i>samekh</i>	60
I (I)	ׂ (resh)	<i>resh</i>	200

Total = 666

COSMIC CATASTROPHIES

- “In those days” (same time period), the heavens are going to explode with catastrophic wonders: the sun and the moon will go dark, and the stars will fall (**24–25**).
 - This is where people today point to some future event (*like blood moons, meteor showers, solar eclipses*). But, here again, we are reading the Bible through our contemporary lenses instead of reading it through the eyes of a 1st century Jew who knew the Bible.
 - Jesus is not giving a weather report! He is using the **cosmic** imagery of OT prophets to describe the total collapse of the city, the temple, and the OC system. He isn’t giving an astronomy lesson; He’s giving an apocalyptic prophesy that is identical to the OT prophets.
- Entrepreneurial
 - **Isaiah 13:10** = judgement on Babylon
 - **Ezekiel 32:7** = judgement on Egypt

GLORIOUS PROMISES

Psalm 2:7–8 = the nations for Christ’s inheritance

Psalm 22:27–28 = all the ends of the earth shall turn to the Lord

Psalm 72:8–11 = dominion from sea to sea

Psalm 110:1 = the enemies will be His footstool

- 1 Cor 15:24–26

Isa 2:2–4 = the highest mountain will be the house of the Lord, and all the nations shall flow to it

Isa 9:6–7 = of the increase of His government...no end

- Dan 2:44–45
- Rev 11:15

Hab 2:24 = as waters cover the sea

- Isa 11:9–10

Parables

- Mustard seed and leaven (Matt 13:31–33)

Matt 28:18–20 = all power and authority

Based on the promise of Jesus that “*this generation*” would not pass away until “*all these things*” take place (13:30), I believe that everything in Mark 13 was fulfilled by 70 AD.

In **Mark 13:24–25**, Jesus speaks of the heavens exploding with catastrophic wonders. This leads many people to look for some future event (e.g., *blood moons, meteor showers, solar eclipses*), but Jesus was simply using the exact same cosmic imagery used by the prophets when describing total destruction. For example, when Isaiah was describing divine judgment on Babylon, he says that “*the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine*” (Isa 13:10). In Ezekiel’s description of the judgment of God on Egypt, the Lord says, “*When I put out your light, I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you and bring darkness upon your land*” (Ezek 32:7–8). In other words, Jesus is not forecasting the weather. He is using cosmic imagery the same way the prophets used it to describe the utter destruction of the temple (Mark 13:1–5) – which happened in 70 AD.

In **Mark 13:26**, Jesus says that “*they will see the Son of Man coming the clouds with great power and glory.*” Again, for His immediate audience who knew the Scripture, they would have immediately recognized the imagery (Daniel 7:13). He isn’t giving a weather report; He is quoting from Old Testament prophecy to describe the coming destruction on the temple. When the Bible speaks of clouds, it’s a picture of judgment. Think: storm clouds, thunder, noise, darkness (e.g., Ps 18:7–12; cf. 2 Sam 22:8–12; Isa 19:1; Ezek 30:3–4, 18; Joel 2:1–2; Nah 1:3). Given the context of this passage (i.e., *the destruction of the temple*) and the timeframe (i.e., “*this generation*”), I think Jesus was using well-known cosmic imagery to describe His coming in judgment upon the temple – and everything that was connected to it.

Finally, in **Mark 13:27**, Jesus speaks about sending His messengers (ἄγγελοι) to gather His chosen people “from the four winds.” As with the rest of this discourse, Jesus is using Old Testament language that His disciples would have understood. Angeloi (ἄγγελοι) is often used in the New Testament to refer to ‘human’ messengers (e.g., Luke 7:24; James 2:25; Rev 2–3), and the “four winds” was a well-known image to symbolize the farthest parts of the earth (similar to the “four corners” of the earth). The prophet Zechariah said that it was the Lord who spread His people abroad “*like the four winds of heaven*” (Zech 2:6; c.f., Jer 49:36), and it was the Lord who would bring them back from “*the farthest parts under heaven*” (Deut 30:4; c.f., Neh 1:8–9; Isa 11:12). I take this to be great commission that Jesus gave to His followers (Matt 28:18–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). And by the time we get to Pentecost, we already see “*every nation under heaven*” hearing the gospel (Acts 2:5)! In the years that followed, the disciples began taking the gospel across the known world. And by the time the apostle Paul penned his epistle to the church in Colosse (c. AD 60–62), he could say that the gospel of Jesus had come to “*all the world*” (Col 1:5–6) and that it had been “*preached*

to every creature under heaven" (1:23) – which was another one of the signs that Jesus gave in the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:10). He said that "*the gospel must first be preached to all the nations*," and within three decades, the apostle believed that this mission had been accomplished. We still have the call to continue going into all the world and making disciples of all the nations. But, to your question, yes, I believe that the prophesy of Jesus in Mark 13 was fulfilled (down to the letter) when Rome sacked Jerusalem and decimated the temple (until there was "not one stone left upon another" – Mark 13:2) in 70 AD.

ISRAEL

The church is the true Israel of God (Gal 3:29; 6:16).

The church wears Israel's crown because she belongs to Israel's King.

"The promises once given to Israel are being fulfilled in the Church, the true Israel of God, as Christ gathers all nations into His covenant people" (cf. Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11–22; Rom. 11:17–26).

The promises given to Israel now belong to the Church because the Church is the continuation and fulfillment of Israel in Christ. Christ Himself is the true Israel (Matt. 2:15), and all who are united to Him by faith—whether Jew or Gentile—are counted as Abraham's offspring and heirs of the covenant promises (Gal. 3:29). Thus, the promises to Israel are not canceled but fulfilled and expanded: the land promise becomes a worldwide inheritance (Rom. 4:13), the temple becomes the people of God indwelt by the Spirit (Eph. 2:19–22), and the kingdom extends to all nations (Dan. 2:35, 44; Matt. 13:31–33).

1. Continuity of God's Covenant Plan

God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David were never revoked; they are being **fulfilled in Christ** and extended to all who are in Him. "*If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*" (Gal. 3:29).

2. Fulfillment, Not Replacement

The Church doesn't replace Israel but represents its *fulfillment and expansion*—a single, redeemed people now composed of both Jew and Gentile. "*There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3:28).

3. Ongoing and Growing Fulfillment

God's covenant promises are progressively unfolding in history as the gospel advances and the nations are discipled (Matt. 28:18–20; Isa. 2:2–4).

You are certainly correct to say that God's plans, purposes, and promises are unchangeable (Mal 3:6; Num 23:19; Ps 33:11; Isa 46:9–10; Jam 1:17; etc.). You alluded to one such text in Romans 11:29 where the apostle Paul says that "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." This most certainly includes the plans, purposes, and promises made to Israel (e.g., Rom 11). Yet, what the historically recent eschatological view (i.e., dispensationalism) misses is the fact that the church is now "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:15–16; c.f., Rom 9:6–8). The church is not Plan B; rather, it is the always-anticipated fulfillment of Plan A (Gen 12:1–3; Jer 31:31–34; Matt 5:17). It's not replacement theology; it's fulfillment theology.

The same Jewish author who wrote Romans 11 spoke often about how the church is now the covenant community of Christ (e.g., Rom 2:18–29; 2 Cor 1:20; Gal 6:16; Eph 2:12–19; Phil 3:3; Col 3:10–11). The apostle Peter (also Jewish) likewise uses old covenant language to describe the new covenantal relationship of the church (1 Pet 2:9–10). Does God still have plans, purposes, and promises for ethnic Israel? Absolutely – but only insomuch as they are grafted back into the olive tree of the people of God (i.e., Rom 11) through faith in Jesus Christ. Their Jewishness no longer sets them apart as the chosen people of God (Matt 21:43; Rom 2:28–29; 9:6–8; Gal 3:28–29; Eph 2:14–16; 3:6; Phil 3:3). The covenant promises of God belong to all who are in Christ (Rom 4:13–16; 8:16–17; Gal 3:29; Eph 3:6).

OC PROMISES NOW BELONGING TO THE NC CHURCH

Thanks for the follow-up, friend. I'll share a few examples here, but this is just scratching the surface.

The promises of Exod 6:7; 19:5–6 ...

– now belong to the church (1 Pet 2:9–10).

The promises of Jer 31:31–34 ...

– were made good in the church (Luke 22:20; Heb 8:6–13).

The promises of Ezek 36:26–27 & Joel 2:28–29 ...

– were fulfilled in the church (Acts 2:16–17; Titus 3:5–6).

The promises of Ps 2:6 & Dan 2:44 ...

– were extended to the church (Matt 21:43; Col 1:13).

The promises of Gen 17:8 ...

– were delivered to the church (Matt 5:5).

The promises of Ezek 37:27 ...

– are now realized in the church (Eph 2:22).

ESCATOLOGY DIVIDES

Hi, John. I sincerely appreciate your engagement, and I absolutely agree with the heart of your comment: Christians ought to be the most humble people on the planet! We would all do well to have some more ‘hand-over-our-mouth’ moments like Job (40:4). And I fully believe that, when this life is over, we will all discover that we were wrong about many secondary or tertiary things (like the details of our eschatology). In our recent podcast on “End Times,” Steve and I began by saying that we hold these things loosely – exactly as you articulated.

I also acknowledge that the church is divided over this issue. Yet, the fact that this issue is divisive does not mean that Christians should ignore it. If we were to set aside the things that are potentially divisive within orthodox Christianity, there would be almost nothing left! We can agree on soteriology (i.e., that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone), and still disagree on pretty much everything else under the sun (e.g., *the doctrines of grace, baptism, the Lord’s Table, pastoral qualifications, Biblical manhood and womanhood, modesty, Christian liberty, wealth, politics, liturgy, volume, icons, Bible translations, children’s ministries, childhood education, livestream, etc.*). Indeed, our differences are legion.

Yet, this is not inherently problematic. Faithful Christians have always had their differences (e.g., Acts 15:36–41) even as we share a love for the glory of God and the gospel of Christ. We can be unshakably united around the gospel and the great commission even as we strongly disagree about secondary and tertiary matters.

All that to say...when it comes to the divisiveness of eschatology, the problem is not with our convictions but with our pride – as you say. We should be humble enough to boldly proclaim our biblically grounded convictions without being offended by those who disagree.

Blessings, brother.

THE LAND PROMISES || EZEK 36–38

Hi Sue! Thank you for hopping into this conversation. It’s been too long since I’ve really meditated on this passage in Ezekiel, and so I was really thankful for your prompting me in this direction. I was particularly encouraged yesterday by the imagery of God breathing life into dead bones and turning what was once a field of death into “an exceedingly great army.” This was the Scripture I needed – at the time I needed to hear it. So, thank you.

As for the “land (גֶּרֶךְ) promises” in Ezekiel (et al.), I will *try* to keep my response brief and concise! In short, my understanding is that the prophetic promises of Ezekiel are infinitely more glorious than geopolitical boundaries in Palestine.

Here is my best attempt at a succinct explanation...

First, we see other promises in these chapters (Ezek 36–38) that are clearly meant to be understood symbolically – not literally.

For example...

1. We know that the imagery of David reigning over Israel forever (Ezek 37:24–25) is messianic language describing the eternal reign of King Jesus who is “the Son of David” and the rightful heir to the throne (2 Sam 7:12–13; Ps 89:3–4; cf. Matt 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 21:9; Luke 1:32–33; Acts 13:22–23; Rom 1:3–4; Rev 22:16). In this case, David is meant to be taken figuratively, *not literally*.
2. We know that the cosmic destruction language (e.g., 38:19–23) is the same kind of imagery used by all the prophets when depicting the coming judgment of God upon a people (e.g., Isa 13:10 [Babylon]; Ezek 32:7 [Egypt]; Ezek 34:4–5 [Edom]; Joel 2:10 [Judah]; Amos 8:9 [Israel]; Micah 3:6; Nah 1:3–6 [Assyria]; etc.). In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus used this same kind of language to describe the destruction of the Jewish temple (Mark 13:1–4, 24–26) – which took place in 70 AD.

Second, we see specific promises here in Ezekiel that were fulfilled within a generation of Jesus’ incarnation.

For example...

1. The promise that the tabernacle of God would be with them (37:27) was fulfilled first through the coming of Jesus who “tabernacled” among us (John 1:14) and then through the church which is the “dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:19–22; cf. 1 Cor 3:16).
2. The promise of the Holy Spirit (36:27; 37:14) came to pass at Pentecost (Acts 2).

Third, the apostle Paul argues that the church is the inheritor of Israel’s promises.

Succinctly, Paul argues that the promises made to Abraham’s offspring (singular) belong to Jesus (Gal 3:16). Jesus is the true Israel, the faithful Son. Thus, all who are in Christ are “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) and the rightful heir of Israel’s promises (Gal 3:29; Rom 8:17; 9:6–8) – which would include the “land promises” (Rom 4:13; cf. Matt 28:18–20).

Fourth, we see specific promises in these Ezekiel passages which Jesus clearly links to the church, not ethno-Judaism.

For example...

1. The promise of “an everlasting covenant” (37:26) was given to the church (Luke 22:20) and is being fulfilled in the church (Heb 13:20–21).
2. The promises of “one nation...and one king” (37:22) and “one shepherd” (37:24) was given to the church (John 10:14–16) and is fulfilled in the church (Eph 2:14–16; 1 Pet 2:9–10; Rev 1:5–6).

Lastly, I think it’s important to remember that God is talking to His bride. When He speaks of His everlasting “covenant” (Ezek 37:26) and Israel’s “unfaithfulness” (39:23), this is the same marital imagery that He has previously used in speaking of Israel as His unfaithful, covenant-breaking bride (16:8, 15, 37–38, 60). Throughout the Old Testament, God often speaks of Israel as His bride. Yet, the New Testament uses the same language when referring to the church (Eph 5:25–32; Rev 19:7–9). Of course, God does not have two

brides. He has one bride: the church, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles (Gal 3:26–29; Eph 2:11–16; Col 3:10–11; cf., Rom 10:12–13). Thus, the promises given to His bride yesterday (i.e., Israel) still belong to His bride today (i.e., the church).

All of that leads me to conclude that “the land” promises in Ezekiel belong to the church and are meant to be taken symbolically as the ultimate fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham – that He would be “the heir of the world” (Rom 4:13). In Christ, the land promises include the entire world (Rom 4:13; Ps 2:8; Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14). This promise belongs to the church (Eph 1:20–22) and is being fulfilled through the church (Matt 28:18–20).

Again, I truly do cherish the opportunity to discuss the glories of God’s Word (like this) with brothers and sisters in Christ. I have the utmost respect for your knowledge in the Word of God, Sue, and I have many wonderful Christian friends who would join you in disagreeing with what I have just articulated. Praise God that our unity is in the Christ – not in our eschatology!!

COMMENT: *What's happening now in time is epic! Daniel's 70th week?*

I agree that there is certainly a lot happening in Israel right now! I praise the Lord for the Israel-Gaza ceasefire and for the hostages who have been released in recent days. This certainly feels like an answer to prayer.

Yet, I would not equate Daniel’s seventy-week prophecy to anything happening in the Middle East right now. As captivating (pun intended) as the events in Israel have been, I think Daniel’s prophesy is about something infinitely more glorious than modern day headlines. I would be happy to share my understanding of this prophesy (Daniel 9:24–27) in greater detail if you’d like, but here are the cliff notes:

1. The countdown of these 70 weeks of years (9:2, 24) began with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem 69 weeks-of-years before the appearance of the Messiah.
2. The 70th week-of-years began with the public ministry of Christ.
3. As the Jews called for the death of their Messiah, they were filling up the measure of Israel’s sins (Dan 9:24; cf. Matt 23:29–36; 1 Thess 2:14–16).
4. In the middle of the this seven-year period (9:27), Jesus “brought an end to sacrifice and offering” (9:27) through His sacrificial death on the cross. There on the cross, Jesus the Messiah was “cut off” (9:26) – “not for Himself” (9:26) but for the sin of His people (2 Cor 5:21). In His death, God tore the veil of the temple (Matt 27:51) officially signaling the “end to sacrifice and offering.”
5. The “covenant” (9:27) refers to the new covenant that was inaugurated by Jesus (Matt 26:28) for the salvation of “many” (9:27; cf., Isa 53:11; Heb 9:28).
6. The “abominations” and the “one who makes desolate” mirrors the language of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse when He was announcing the destruction of the temple (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20) – which came to pass when Rome sacked Jerusalem in AD 70.
7. And the angelic messenger (Gabriel) who brought this vision to Daniel (9:21) was the same angelic messenger who brought the announcement of the coming Messiah to Mary (Luke 1:19, 26)!

There’s obviously more that could be said, but this is the outline of why I believe that Daniel’s “seventy weeks” vision – which was “determined for [that] people and for [their] holy city” (9:24) – began with the rebuilding of Jerusalem and culminated with its destruction in AD 70. This was also the view of the early historians (e.g., Josephus).

But none of this negates the fact that big things are happening in the land of Israel! May God grant us wisdom to discern, understand, and redeem the time in which we live (Matt 16:3; 1 Chr 12:32; Eph 5:16). Love you, Brenda!