



The Gospel of Mark | Mark 13:14-23 May 17th, 2020

Well, this morning, we're gonna go back to Mark, Chapter 13. And if you're just joining us for the first time, if you're a person tuning in online, you haven't been with us for the last year plus, as a church we've been going through the book of Mark, the Gospel of Mark, and we're in chapter 13 and we're working very slowly through this chapter. This is a very confusing chapter for people, and I've I wanted to take this very slow. And one of the reasons I've said it's very confusing is that people make three very big mistakes. They just read over the text, they don't pay attention to what's there, or they read into the text. This is a text that gives us a lot of our very fantastical end of the world ideas, the end of times, the second return of Jesus. Or we just read this out of context. And when you read verses out of context, it is never helpful. So, we're trying to just take our time and go very slowly. I would love to do this whole chapter in one sitting, but we can't really do that. And so while it should be studied that way, we can't, and so it's important for us to kind of recap each week because the main thing that I want you to keep paying attention to is that this text is not to help you predict end of the world events. Rather, Mark 13 is to help you learn what it meant for the disciples of Jesus to be faithful in the present moment that they were living in, and likewise for us to do the same thing, because disciples of Jesus are always called to faithful discipleship in the present moment.

So, we're gonna begin looking again at the very first verse here. I just want to recap the first four verses and here's what it says, it says, As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" Now it's the location they are in on the Mount of Olives that gives us the name of this section, called the Olivet Discourse, it's the discourse that Jesus gave on the Mount of Olives. And notice in verse four there are two questions that Jesus has been asked by his disciples: When will these things be, and what will be the sign that they're about to be accomplished? Now remember, we're asking what things are they talking about? They're talking about the things in verse two where Jesus said, there's not gonna be one stone left upon another that's not gonna be thrown down. So, the whole topic here is the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which is going to take place in AD 70. Now, what they want to know is, when will the temple be destroyed? And what will be the sign that the temple is about to be destroyed? And notice they ask for *the* sign, not signs plural. And so, even

though our Bible headings oftentimes put in by the editors or the publisher of these Bibles, tell us that these are the signs of the end times, we've seen in verses five through eight and then nine through 13 that these aren't really necessarily signs of the end times. Rather they're just some things that are gonna take place. And so, in verses five through eight we saw that Jesus talked about a number of very general experiences that everybody was gonna experience, whether you were a Christian or a non-Christian was irrelevant. But there were gonna be people who came along claiming they were the Messiah. There were gonna be wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, and Jesus says none of that's the end. That's not the sign of the end. That's just stuff that's gonna happen along the way. So, none of those things have any end time significance. Then we saw last week in verses nine through 13 some very specific things. Very specific experiences that would take place only in the life of Christians, mainly these disciples of Jesus were gonna experience these things. And those were suffering and persecution related things, experiences, they were gonna have. And so he had said they were going to be drugged before governors and kings, they were gonna be beaten in synagogues, they were going to stand before Jewish councils, and have to give accounts; and yet again, none of those things were meant to be signs of the end times as much as they were just things that were going to happen because of their faithfulness to Jesus. It was gonna turn everybody against each other because faithfulness to Jesus meant unfaithfulness to any other agenda in the world. Jesus's agenda was. And so rather than this providing some sort of timetable of end time significance, it just says, listen, here's what it means, even in extreme hardship, in bad circumstances, to be a faithful disciple to Jesus. And so now we come to verse number 14. And it's here in this verse that we find Jesus's answer to the disciples two questions: when will the temple be destroyed? And what will be the sign when the temple is about to be destroyed? Jesus refers here in verse 14 to one sign that signals to these disciples everything that he has been telling them was going to happen to the temple. This is it. This is the prophesized destruction of the temple at hand, it alerts all the people living in that generation that it's gonna take place. So, in response to verse four, look at verse four, when will these things be? Jesus now answers it in verse 14. It is when you see; when is it gonna happen? It is when you see. And so, let's look at Mark 13:14-23 together.

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down nor enter his house, to take anything out, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that it may not happen in winter. For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look there he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

Let's pray one more time before we dig into these verses this morning. And so, Father, I pray for all of us, our staff who are seated here this morning, I pray, Lord, for everyone who is hearing this at home, in their own house, in their living rooms. Lord, that with

our Bibles open before you, we would hear your words to us. They would come alive, Lord, they would resonate with us because your word is truth. We pray Lord, now that you would help us understand these verses. In the name of Jesus, our King, who has given us his spirit in order that we might understand what has been spoken. Amen.

Well, look with me then at verse 14. We're gonna pick right up here, and I want you to notice two words then. Notice the word 'but' and then notice a little bit further down right after the parenthetical statement the word 'then.' But, then. These words signal a shift from what's happened in verses five through 13. But when you see, notice that word 'but,' when you see; up until this point, what has Jesus told his disciples? He's told him not to be anxious, and he's told them to patiently endure suffering and persecution. The word 'but' signals a change. Everything is about to change here. So, look with me again at the text. Look at verse four, in verse four it says this, tell us when, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? Now drop down to verse seven, and when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place. But the end is not yet. Look at verse 11, and when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say. So, notice they've said when's it gonna happen? When's the sign gonna take place? And Jesus says well, when you hear of wars, don't be alarmed. When they take and bring you to trial and you suffer, don't be anxious. Now look at verse 14, but when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then, but then, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. So, in other words, don't be anxious about false messiahs, wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, patiently endure suffering and persecution. But when you see the abomination that causes desolation, then you flee. So, everything up until this point, he said: Be patient. Don't be anxious. Don't get excited. But when you see this, run! Now, notice what happens, then you flee. Then you flee. Now it's time to do something different. Now it's time to take action. So, when they see something happening, they are to do something, alright? What are they to do when they see the abomination of desolation? It says they're to flee to the mountains and notice who it is that's to flee to the mountains. It's those who are in Judea. So notice, it's a very specific group of people, he tells the disciples, when you see this, let those who are in Judea do this. So it's a very specific group of people, and it's a very specific place. It's those in Judea and what are they to do? They're to flee. And so it's very specific. Now look at what happens. So, he says, this is to take place when this sign occurs. And what's the sign? Well, he says, the sign is the abomination of desolation. Now this is one of those phrases that we come to in the Bible that when you see it, I mean, this makes everybody's end time antennas, you know, just shoot up. We get really worked up. Oh, my gosh. Abomination of desolation. I've heard about that. That has something to do with the end. This is it. Jesus is coming back. There's going to be rapture. Unmanned airplanes crashing into buildings. Cars are going to just go off the side of the road. This is just gonna be crazy. This is where we get our bumper stickers, right? In case of the rapture: Warning! This car is gonna be unmanned. And so, we get really amped up because this is the abomination of desolation. But let's just take a look at it. As we've said all along here, we gotta study this in context, both the literary context, where it falls here, not being interpreted by The New York Times, but being interpreted by 11, 12, and 13, the chapters that we're in in Mark, and then also we've got to take place with the historical context, giving us meaning and understanding.

So, let's just break this phrase down, alright? So literally, this should be stated as the abomination that causes desolation. That's how you would really translate very literally this Greek phrase, the abomination that causes desolation. So, what's an abomination? Well, that means something loathsome or detestable, something that's repugnant to God. It's often used in the context of idolatrous pagan worship. That's an abomination, Israel would say. And then desolation means something that's been devastated, or it's been rendered uninhabitable. And so, in Matthew, Chapter 23 which comes right before Matthew 24, that's his discourse of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus tells Jerusalem, your house has been left desolate. It's been left uninhabitable. And so, when we see this, that means that the abomination that causes desolation means when the disgusting thing to God, this idolatrous thing, that devastates or makes something uninhabitable takes place. So, when this disgusting thing that makes something uninhabitable takes place, that's the meaning of the abomination of desolation. So, in other words, when something happens that desecrates the worship of God in the temple, when that happens, then they're to do something, they're to flee to the mountains. So, this is a phrase that we hear, and we go, what is the abomination of desolation? It sounds really confusing to us. Or we hear it through years and years and layers and layers of Left Behind novels and movies about the end of the world with Kirk Cameron starring in it. So, he after Growing Pains, he grew up and became a person involved in the tribulation, I guess. And so, this is the kind of thing that we come to the text and we want to read meaning into the text, right? But we have to just stop and say, now, if I would have been one of Jesus's disciples, if I would have been Peter, James, John, or Andrew and I would have heard him say the abomination of desolation, what would I have thought? We don't think about it the way they thought about it, it makes no difference because you understand they didn't think about it as people living in 2020, they thought about it as people living in AD 30. And so, they hear it and they think something. Well, this is a phrase that actually appears in the Book of Daniel on three different occasions. It appears in Chapter 9:27 of Daniel and Chapter 11:31, and then again in Chapter 12:11. Now I just want to read to you one of those samples from Daniel 11:31. It says this, Forces from him shall appear and profane, that means defile, forces are going to appear and it's from some person, it says from him; they're going to appear and they're going to defile or profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination. In other words, they're going to set up this disgusting, idolatrous thing, and it's a thing that look, that makes desolate. That means that makes devastated or uninhabitable this temple. So, in other words, someone is going to appear that is going to do something here in the temple that's gonna be such a disgusting thing that it's gonna make the temple and its worship impossible. It's gonna make it uninhabitable, alright? So, Daniel is predicting something. This happens years before, right? This time that Jesus exists. Daniel is predicting something specific, and what he's predicting we know from history, is he's predicting the moment that the temple is going to be defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes. And this takes place in 167 BC. In 167 BC there's a revolt that takes place and the Seleucid king, this would be Antiochus Epiphanes, who was a Greek king who ruled over this Greek empire in the region at the time, he's going to march into Jerusalem, he's gonna come right into the temple, and when he comes in the temple is going to do something that's absolutely ridiculous. He's going to build a pagan altar over the altar of the burnt, the altar of the burnt sacrifices of Yahweh, in Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem. He's gonna build an altar right over the top of that altar and he's gonna burn, he's going to create a burnt

offering sacrifice of a pig right on top of that altar. And now if you're an Israelite, pigs are unclean animals. Swine is unclean. So, he's saying, we're gonna bring right into the middle of the temple, this unclean pig, and burn it right over the top of the altar that is holy to God. And then he sets up a statue to the Greek god Zeus and declares the temple to be Zeus' temple.

Now, when that happens, you have to understand that is an absolute abomination. It defiles that temple, and it makes that area of sacrifice uninhabitable for the worship of God's people until it's rightly cleansed. And so, they hear this and they say, oh, like Antiochus Epiphanes. So, no other phrase, this phrase 'abomination of desolation,' it doesn't appear anywhere else in the entire Bible except for right here in Daniel and right here. The only other place it appears, is outside of the Bible, in one of the apocryphal books that we have that are not part of the canon of Scripture. They're not, we don't consider them inspired, but they do create for us some historical context. And so, in 1 Maccabees, we read these words in Chapter 1:54 and again in verse 59. It says this, now on the 15th day of Cheslev in the 145th year, that'd be 167 BC, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering; and on the 25th day of the month, they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering. And so, this 1 Maccabees is written after the events of 167 BC, it's written historically looking back. And so, 1 Maccabees is telling us what happened. It's saying, hey, and here's what happened when Antiochus Epiphanes came right into the temple, he erected an idol to Zeus, called it Zeus' temple, built an altar over the temple of Yahweh and burned unclean swine as a burnt offering right on top of Yahweh's altar. And when this happened, it defiled the temple, it was a disgusting thing to God, it was repugnant to him. It was an abomination. And it left the temple desolate, uninhabitable. Now, when they heard this as disciples, now listening to Jesus, fast forward now many years in the future, 200 years in the future, the disciples hear Jesus say, now when you see this happening, don't get worked up. When you see this happening, don't get worked up. But when you see the abomination that causes desolation, run! Now when they hear this they say, oh, my gosh, there's only one thing that is known to them as the abomination of desolation. And it's what happened when Antiochus Epiphanes came into the temple. Now that means that for them, hearing Jesus say this was as unmistakable as if I said to you, but when you see the events of 9/11 take place, and you say but that already happened. But if I say it to you, you would instantly know, wait a minute. He must be saying terrorists are gonna hijack planes. If I said to you, Pearl Harbor, you understand what that means as an American. We say, 'it was like a Pearl Harbor,' you say, oh, it means it was like a surprise attack. When they heard this, there was an unmistakable understanding on their part. We don't understand this because we're not them. We don't live there. We have to explain this, which isn't that fascinating because look what Jesus does right after this, he says in parentheses, let the reader understand. You know why he says this? Because guess why? He's going to say this to these people, notice, let the reader understand. Readers do what? They either read it or they listen to someone read it to them, right? Well, Mark's Gospel is going to be written some 20 or so years after Jesus says this. What Mark is doing is, is Mark is writing what's called an aside. That means that Mark is writing something that the audience hears, but the characters involved don't hear. And so Jesus didn't actually say to the disciples, let the reader understand, Jesus just told them this, and then 20 years later, the readers of Mark, they read it and they said, oh wow, and he's saying at this point, Mark, as he puts this into the text, he's saying,

now whoever's reading this out loud to the people that are going to be the audience of Mark's Gospel, he's saying, you're gonna have to explain to them the abomination of desolation. Jesus didn't have to explain it to his disciples, they knew it. You're gonna have to explain it to them. Just like today. I'm explaining it to you.

And so, we come to this and we say, okay, well, then what is Jesus talking about when he says to these disciples the abomination of desolation? Because you just said that meant what happened in 167 BC, but he's telling them when they see it happen. Well, what he's saying is, is this, he's saying when you see something take place that is unmistakably just like the event of 167 BC, when you see that happen, you better run. And so, guess what he's describing? He's describing the events that are going to take place during the Jewish War of AD 66 to 70, that's going to culminate in AD 70 with someone desecrating the temple as it's burned to the ground and never rebuilt again. In fact, Luke's Gospel in this parallel account, tells us this exact thing. Listen what it says in Luke 21:20-21, But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. See Josephus, the Jewish historian who was an eyewitness to the Jewish War that took place in AD 66 to 70, he tells all about what happened. In fact, he tells us that at one point in around 67 or 68, Jewish zealots took over the temple and they made the temple their headquarters for their battle and their war plans and profane sacrifices were taking place right there in the temple. And it was considered uninhabitable by the high priest to perform the sacrifices that were according to the Levitical law at that point. And then we know that when the actual siege took place, that the Roman soldiers, under the leadership of Titus, when he comes marching into the city and destroys and levels the temple to the ground, we know that they brought the Roman standards, which were considered to be objects of worship, right into the temple, and as they brought them into the temple, we know that they were making sacrifices in the temple courts while the temple was burning to the ground behind them. These sorts of things were unimaginable to take place in these people's lives. They were unimaginable blasphemies. They were literally an abomination. So, Jesus is saying when you see all of that, then you notice you got to run for the hills. So, then he gives them this aside statement, let the reader understand. And I've just explained what that is. Now he says to the disciples, so when you see this abomination take place, when you see someone come and the temple is beginning to be defiled and there's desecration take place, when you see that you need to flee, notice that - when you see, flee. When you see this, you're to do something, you're to flee to the mountains. In other words, run for the hills. Remember, up until this point, what has he told them to do? Hey, look, don't be anxious. Patiently endure suffering and persecution. The end is not yet. But when you see this happening, man, you need to run for your life. Run for the hills as fast as you can.

And actually, this is a little bit unusual advice because, you know, in the ancient world, whenever cities were attacked, whenever people invaded, the people ran into the city because the city was walled and so you would run into the city for the protection of the walls. Jesus is saying to these disciples, look, when you see this don't run into the city. This city is doomed, and it's gonna offer you no protection at all so you better run for the hills. So what Jesus is saying to the disciples as they've asked the question way back in verse four, so when is all this gonna happen that the temple is gonna be destroyed? And what will be the sign when the temple is about to be destroyed? And

Jesus says ok, listen, when you hear wars, rumors of wars, false messiahs, earthquakes, famines, don't get anxious, that's not it. That's just gonna happen. God's in control. It's just gonna happen. Whenever you endure persecution, when they bring you before council's, beat you in synagogues, when they stand you before governors and kings, when family members turn against you, when you suffer all sorts of things on account of me, don't get anxious. Don't be alarmed. Stay the course. The gospels going to continue to prevail. But! When you see the temple about to be desecrated, as it was in 167 BC, when you see that about to be repeated, when you see another 9/11, you better get out of the city. You better run for the hills as fast as you can. Notice the urgency of this situation in verse 15, let the one who is on the housetop not go down nor enter his house to take anything out, it says on the housetop, in this ancient city of Jerusalem and throughout the region at the time, the way houses were built is they had flat rooftops. So, it's not like they were all up on the houses like we have, where you have roofs that are angled. They were flat rooftops, and this was actually like an extra living space for them, it was like a patio. They just go up there at night and they'd relax and enjoy the evening. He says, look, when you see that Jerusalem is about to fall, when you see that the temple is about to be destroyed, that it's gonna be desecrated, don't, at that moment, the urgency here is that you don't even go back into your house to pack a bag. There's no time for that. Just get out of the city. If you're on the roof, come down and run. Don't say 'I need to go back in. I need to pick up this keepsake.' You don't have time for that. You need to get out of there. Notice this shift that I talked about, Jesus said all along, look, don't be anxious. Endure patiently. But here, nothing is patient, it's time to be anxious. Run! Get out! Don't go back to get anything, he says in verse 16, let the one who's out working in the field, that's the person who is out doing their daily work in the field, don't turn back to your house. Don't say 'well I gotta run home and get my cloak.' Now a cloak was an essential item. It was what they used at night to stay warm. He said, you don't even have time for essential items. This isn't time to look for your toothbrush. You just run. You left your cloak at home while you're out working in the field during the day because it was hot? Get out of there. Don't worry about the cloak. Get out of the city.

Verse 17, and alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days, I know the word alas seems weird. We don't say that very often to one another. I don't walk around and say, alas! But when you hear this word alas you understand, it means whoa! In fact, in the NIV, it's translated 'how dreadful it will be.' Whoa to that person. How dreadful it will be. For who? For those who are pregnant and those who are nursing infants in those days. This is referring specifically to those who were fleeing Jerusalem. This isn't talking about people who were in Jerusalem, it's those who are fleeing. They got to get out of the city and escaping for your life while you're pregnant is very, very difficult. If you're, if you have small children, babies, that you're nursing, I mean to try to run to the mountains, I mean, I don't know about you, but most people that I know, they're not pregnant, and they don't have small babies that they're carrying with them, and they have a hard time climbing mountains. So, if you try to climb a mountain carrying a baby oh my goodness, this is how difficult this is gonna be. And so, Jesus says in verse 18, just pray that this doesn't happen in the winter. Because the winter was the rainy season. That means that it would create rivers that would swell and there would be so much mud you can imagine trying to get out of the city, and there is just mud everywhere. And you're trying to make it up to the mountains. And there's cold weather and the temperature is, is making you shiver and

shake. And you have very limited energy and you don't have much food and you can't climb up the muddy hill trying to get out of the city. He's saying, just pray it doesn't happen during the winter. Because you're gonna have to move fast. Now, Jesus tells them right after this what exactly is gonna happen to the city, and he says, what's gonna happen is gonna be worse than anything you've ever seen. I mean, it's, you've never seen anything as bad as this is going to be. Verse 19, For in those days, now notice he says, in those days again. Now that should be an indicator for us as we're studying this together in context, what days? Well he's already referred to those days back in verse 17, hasn't he? He's said, he's talked about mothers who were fleeing. So again, you notice here, this isn't a reference to the end times, the end of the world. This is a reference to these people, and it's a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and to the temple. And he says, in those days, there's going to be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of creation that God created until now and never will be. Now notice that phrase, 'there will be such tribulation.' Alright, here's the origin of the term, 'the great tribulation.' In fact, that's exactly what Matthew calls it. In Matthew 24:21 he says, the great tribulation, and that's a phrase that's often associated with the end times, right? Some of us have read the Left Behind novels or we've seen others on television, popularized teachers, who have taught us that there's going to be a rapture followed by 3.5 years of tribulation, followed by 3.5 years of great tribulation. And so, we read right into this, this great tribulation.

But I want you to notice here that Jesus is obviously not describing a worldwide tribulation here, is he? Or the end of time. Notice, he's already said in verse 14, let those who were in Judea flee to the mountains. So, isn't that fascinating? All you had to do to escape this tribulation was just leave the city. That's all you had to do, head to the mountains. So, this isn't a worldwide tribulation that you can't run and hide from. He's been telling them how to avoid this tribulation, which doesn't make it sound like the great tribulation at the end of time. He just says, look, when you see this happening, get out of this. Don't stick around and be in the tribulation. Not a rapture takes you away from this tribulation. You take yourself away from it. Just go to the mountains, get out of here. And notice the boundary of this tribulation. It didn't extend beyond the city limits of Jerusalem. Everything happening was happening in the city walls. So, the context again makes it very clear. Jesus is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. So here he uses hyperbole, which is over exaggeration, alright? Uh, it's when we say of someone you know, he can jump higher than anybody in the world. Well I don't know that that's true. I mean, there's a lot of people that can jump really high, right? Obviously not talking about me when they say that, but this is a way of describing tribulation that's so severe. So he emphasizes how terrible it is by saying, you know there's gonna be tribulation that you haven't seen this since the beginning of time, you haven't seen it in fact, not just since the beginning of time, but look, until now, you've never seen it and even never will be again after it, which I think is interesting of itself, right? If he says, and there's never gonna be anymore tribulation as bad as this, it doesn't seem to be indicating that times about to be over, because it would imply there would be more tribulation in the future that they would endure. It just wouldn't be as bad as that. So, we shouldn't really force this into, like, a rigid literalism and read the Bible in such a way that we say, well, right there it says this. I mean, isn't this what it says in 1 Kings? Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. Well, we know that's not true. You say wait a minute. How do we know that's not true? You just undid everything I believe about the Bible as God's word. Well, I can tell you

why Solomon's not the wisest man who ever lived because Jesus lived. And Jesus is wiser than Solomon. So, it can't mean that Solomon is the wisest, it just means that there's nobody, that he's on par with no one else. I mean, this is as wise as it gets. Well here Jesus is saying, this is bad as it gets. We see this in Exodus 11:6, it says about the Passover, there's gonna be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there never has been nor ever will be again. If we were to study all the text in the Bible that used this sort of language, we'd come to realize that this is just simply the way that the Bible uses literary language to refer to terrible judgement from God. And what's happening in Jerusalem, Jerusalem and its temple is being destroyed just as Jesus has said would take place throughout his parables when he has told these people in Mark's Gospel, hey, listen, there was a man and he had a vineyard and he went away and someone came and they killed him. And then someone came and they killed him. He said, Jerusalem, you kill the prophets. And what does Jesus say? He's gonna come and destroy them. This is what he's been pointing to, is this moment that Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. How bad was it? I mean, when this actually took place, when Jesus says this is as bad as it could be, how bad? Well, I mean, it was so bad that it's almost beyond comparison. In fact, let me just tell you, you know, during the siege of Jerusalem during this five month stretch of the actual siege, we know from Josephus' eyewitness accounts, we know 1.1 million Jews were killed in the city during this five month stretch of time. In fact, that this is the greatest percentage of a population of one city to ever be killed in any moment in history. Not only that, 100,000 of them were carried away into slavery and in captivity, thousands of them were crucified just beyond the city walls where everybody in the city could see this taking place. At times, up to 500 people a day were crucified outside of the city, within the visual range of the people in the city meant to terrify them. And then they cut off all the food supply to the city so that there was no food and the famine within the city was so bad that we have actual eyewitness accounts of mothers selling their children for food. And we have one account of a woman roasting her baby in order to eat this child. This is how bad this is. And so, when Jesus says this is as bad as you can possibly imagine, nothing like this has ever occurred. Nor is it gonna happen again. I mean, he's putting this up there, saying, this is going to be just, you can't imagine how bad this is gonna be. And then notice what he says, this is so bad that no one, in fact, would have even survived if God didn't end it. And he says that the only reason that God ended it was for the sake of his people. Verse 20, the Lord, if he had not cut short the days, notice that, if the Lord had not cut short, if he didn't end this, no human being would be saved, no one in that whole city would have made it. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. Now who, what does he mean when he says the elect who he's chosen? In the Old Testament, this was the way that Israel was always referred to. Israel was God's chosen people. And they were his chosen people because they were the people God had made a covenant with. So, Abraham was the man that God chose through whom he would redeem the whole world. And so, Abraham's son, Isaac, was the recipient of the same covenant promise. His son Jacob was the recipient of the same covenant promise. Jacobs name was changed to Israel. He had 12 sons who became the head of the 12 tribes of Israel. And these Israelites were known as those whom God had chosen. They were his elect people through whom he would fulfill all of his promises to the world. And from Israel comes one man, Jesus, and Jesus becomes the fulfillment of every promise. And so, in the New Testament, the elect, the chosen, are always identified as those who are now believers in Christ. Those who are in Jesus. In fact, only here and in verse 22 and in verse 27 will this phrase appear in

Mark's Gospel. In other words, what Mark is saying is this, hey, there's probably a few Christians that are left behind in this city during the siege. And it's for their sake that God cut short the time of this destruction upon Jerusalem. If it weren't for them, the whole thing, no one would have lived. And so, God showed special favor to these people.

Now this section, verses five through 23 alright, ends just as it began with this repeated warning against deceivers and a repeated command to be on guard. Remember, we've seen that repeated command, the Greek word I keep talking about, blepo, that keeps showing up. Be on guard. Watch out! Stay awake! Right? This word appears here again, along with another warning against being deceived by false teachers. So, it's like a book end on the whole thing. And so, look at Verse 21, then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "Look, there he is!" do not believe it. In other words, don't be led astray. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders to lead astray. Notice he says don't believe it. Don't be led astray. Now he says these people are going to show up, they're gonna try to lead you astray. If possible, they would lead astray the elect God's very chosen people, but rather verse 23, be on guard. There it is. Same word as verse five and verse nine, blepo. And notice what he says, I have told you. Who? All Peter, James, John, all these disciples, I've told you all things beforehand. So now you know. So, there's no reason for you to be caught off guard. You asked me the question, when's it gonna happen? What will be the sign when all this is gonna take place? And now look at what he says, I've told you. You asked. I told you. You said when's it gonna happen? I told you this. Don't be anxious when you hear this. Don't give up patiently enduring when this happens. But when you see this happen, run! Now I've told you. And because I've told you, you shouldn't be caught off guard. He says they're gonna be false messiahs. You know what? During the Jewish War, there were tons of people who showed up saying, I'm the King, follow me! There were tons of people who showed up prophesying that they were bringing God's deliverances. He says don't be led astray by those people. Somebody shows up and says, stay in the city, don't leave. God's going to deliver us. You look at them and say, wait a minute, Jesus told me. He said, don't be deceived by false prophets. I am not supposed to listen to this guy. Jesus said, when you see, flee! That's what I'm supposed to do.

And so here again, as I said, this is an exhortation. Be a faithful disciple to Jesus. We, as Christians, we listen to Jesus. That's who we listen to. We listen to him. We don't listen to false prophets and deceitful people. These people showed up that performed counterfeit miracles just as people had done throughout biblical times and just as people do today. They perform counterfeit miracles, trying to lead people astray. And he says, listen, if they could lead the elect astray, they would. But they're not gonna lead you astray because when you see this, what are you gonna you do? You're gonna flee. And then notice, once again, he gives that command. The command is 'be on guard' and it's emphatic. And what I mean by emphatic is that in the Greek text, which is how this original manuscript appears, the word 'you' appears at the beginning, which means it's emphatic. He's emphasizing them. And so, he's saying to them, you be on guard! You watch out! There's gonna be people, they're gonna come, they're going to say this, but you do this, you be on guard. Everything he said has been up until this point, very clearly spoken to his disciples. And everything he has said has not only been spoken to them, but it's been to exhort them. You be on guard. And so,

we come to this conclusion of this first section here from verses one through 23. Now, remember I told you three weeks ago, I would have loved to have preached that all as one and then preached the second half all as one, but so much for that. Well, now we got Mark 13:1-23 and we got to draw some conclusions about this section right here before we move into the next one.

So, the first thing we can just do is look at it and say, hey, that's obviously not about the end of the world. I mean, it's pretty clear. It's about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. We could look at it say, alright, second of all Mark 1-23 there, in Chapter 13, it's not giving us signs to predict the end of the world and when it's going to take place. In fact, it's telling the disciples how to pay attention to what's happening in Jerusalem so they could flee, see how pastoral it actually is? Now don't be anxious. Don't be alarmed. Endure persecution. I promise you the gospel, it's going to go to the ends of the world and listen I'm not gonna leave you unsettled here. When you see this happen, get out of the city. He's told them very clearly. Now, one of the reasons this can't be about the end of the world is because we're going to see in the coming weeks here in this chapter, that Jesus is gonna talk about a thing that he doesn't know anything about. He says about this day, I can't tell you. Well, Jesus has just told them very specifically about some of this stuff. And so, it's not the end of the world. Third thing I want you to just notice is this, what's often referred to as the great tribulation, well, it's already come and gone. I mean, when you look at this, this if you're going to refer to that verse as the great tribulation, well, then that's come and gone. It happened back in AD 67 to 70, before the temple was destroyed. So, you can't run around really amped up about when is the great tribulation gonna be, if you're trying to pull it out of that verse. So, if we're gonna talk about a tribulation, let's not take it out of this verse. Let's go find another verse, if there's a verse. So, what we need to do then, is we need to stop for just a moment and just recognize how monumental the destruction of the temple actually was, and why it took place. And that's what we're gonna look at next week. How monumental was it that this happened? And why did it happen? It's not just that the Romans came in and did it. It's all along, we've seen that God is behind this. So why did this happen? And how monumental was it that it took place?

But I want to close with this. Jesus never throughout this text, told his disciples to speculate about when he would return. In fact, he did just the opposite, didn't he? He kept telling them, hey, don't get worked up about this. Quit worrying about wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, false messiahs, false prophets. Don't even be worried about suffering and persecution. Stop trying to predict all this stuff. I'll tell you what you should know. You ought to know this: When you see this happen, get out of the city. So, Jesus never tells them to speculate, but notice what he does tell them. He does tell them that they're to be ready. He tells them, when this happens, you're to be ready. So, in other words, Jesus isn't worried about us worrying about when, Jesus tells those disciples the same thing he tells us today, which is this. Hey, you just need to be ready for my return when it happens. You need to be ready for this temple to be destroyed. And then you need to be ready to live your life faithfully to the gospel. And that means that if we're not given a timetable by which to predict all these things, if we're not given some signs that we can point to that says well, this must be the end, because there's more earthquakes in Oklahoma today than ever before in history. But rather to know that at any given moment Christ could appear, then that means that I

am to be ready. So, while Mark 13:1-23 is not about the return of Christ, that's not the same thing as me saying that Christ isn't going to return. In fact, he will. He will, at any moment, without warning, without a sign. And then it will be too late. So, you know what that means? That means that you have to come to grips today with the fact that you might not make it through the next song that we're gonna sing before the end of this online service. Before Christ appears. You're waiting for the end of Coronavirus. You're wondering if kids will go back to school in the fall. What you ought to wonder is, if Christ might return before you go to sleep tonight, and if he does, then you will stand before him. And no, just no amount of money, no amount of power, no amount of good deeds, can protect you and make you immune from the Coronavirus. Notice that rich people got the Coronavirus. Powerful people got the Coronavirus. Good people got the Coronavirus, and died from it. Just as none of those things can insulate you from getting Coronavirus, so can none of those things insulate you from the judgment of Christ when he appears. And just as the Coronavirus came without warning, ohh, but even with the Coronavirus, didn't we at least get a couple of months warning? We heard about this new thing going on in China. Hey, we heard that they closed the borders to China. We've heard they've closed the borders to Europe. You know, we've heard that Washington State has had an outbreak and they're locked, we've heard California, my neighborhoods closed. We got a lot of warning. Right? Let me tell you this. There will be no warning before Christ returns. Stop looking for earthquakes. They're not gonna give you warning. Stop looking for wars to give you, you're not getting any warning. Christ, like that, could appear today. And if he appears today, then what? What would you do then? Just as money could not keep you from Coronavirus. Power could not keep you from it. Good deeds could not keep you from it. So, when Christ appears, there will be nothing you will have to offer him as a payment or an excuse or a way out of judgment. There will be no bribing this judge when he appears. The only hope that you will have in that moment will be that Christ has died for your sins. Christ did what you could not do for yourself. And so, now today come to Christ in repentance. Turn your back on everything that you allow to define your life and come to Jesus, who is merciful and great and fall before him in faith. Cast yourself upon him and say Jesus I have nothing to offer. I have nothing that you need. You don't need my money. You don't need my power. You certainly don't need any good deeds because I have none compared to how good you are. But I offer myself to you. I give myself to you completely in trust. I ask you to save me from my sins. Because then, if that's the case, if you knew all your sins were forgiven, if you knew that when Christ appeared, it wouldn't be for your judgment, but it would be for your heavenly reward, well then, you wouldn't be worried about Christ appearing today. In fact, you would join me in praying that he would appear today. Because if Christ were to appear today, everything would be right. And so, to that end I exhort you, come to Jesus today. If you're a faithful disciple of Jesus, then like Jesus I want to exhort you today. Don't be alarmed about all the wars and rumors of wars and famines and earthquakes and diseases of the world, endure patiently suffering and persecution, stay faithful in the present moment. Don't get worked up. Look and behold the sky as you wait for the day that Christ will appear. When heaven will tear away the thin veil that separates us on earth from God who is present in heaven. And we will behold him in all of his glory, in all of his majesty. And when we do, it will be our joy forever.

And so, join me, let's pray that even this day, Christ would come. Because, Lord, there is nothing that we need to wait on. I don't need to wait on a particular sign before you

come. I don't need to wait on an event before you come, you will come. And you might come now. You might come today. And Lord, if you do, Hallelujah! We will be in your presence. If you don't come this day, if you don't come for the next 10, 20, 30, or 40 years of my lifetime, then, Lord, for those of us alive now, might we be like those faithful disciples that you spoke to on that day? Peter, James, John, and Andrew, who you said to them the gospel will go to the ends of the earth and they might suffer because of it. But their suffering will be worth it. Because one, the gospel will be being advanced. And two, because as the gospel advances, more people are brought into the Kingdom. And what's good about the Kingdom is it has a King who will come one day, and he will set the world right. Every war will be ended. Every famine will be ended, there will be peace, and there will be abundance. And it will be because Jesus has come. And so even so, Lord Jesus, come. We ask this in your name. Amen.