

THE REAL JESUS
A Series on the Book of Mark
“On the Second Coming”
Mark 13:1-37
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New City Church of LA
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I. Introduction

Welcome to New City!

We are in the middle of a series called THE REAL JESUS. We’ve been looking at the Book of Mark to get a picture of the real Jesus. We are now on Mark 13. This is the longest discourse of Jesus recorded in Mark. The topic is the temple of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Jesus.

There are so many disputes among God-loving and biblically faithful Christians on this issue. Some of congenial but others are not. I heard a story describing something that had happened on the Golden Gate Bridge. This man said:

- I was standing in the middle of the Golden Gate Bridge, admiring the view, when another tourist walked up alongside of me to do the same. I heard him say quietly as he took in the beauty of the view: What an awesome God.
- I turned to him and said “Are you a Christian?”
- He said “Yes, I’m a Christian.”
- I said “So am I” and we shook hands.
- I said “Are you a Liberal or a Fundamental Christian?”
- He said “I’m a Fundamental Christian.”
- I said “So am I” and we smiled and nodded to each other.
- I said “Are you a Covenant or Dispensational Fundamental Christian?”
- He said “I’m a Dispensational Fundamental Christian.”
- I said “So am I” and we slapped one another on the back.
- I said “Are you an early Acts, mid Acts, or late Acts Dispensational Fundamental Christian?”
- He said “I’m a mid Acts Dispensational Fundamental Christian.”
- I said “So am I” and we agreed to exchange Christmas cards each year.

- I said “Are you an Acts 9 or 13 mid Acts Dispensational Fundamental Christian?”
- He said “I’m an Acts 9 mid Acts Dispensational Fundamental Christian.”
- I said “So am I!” And we hugged one another right there on the bridge.
- I said “Are you a pre-Trib or post-Trib Acts 9 mid Acts Dispensational Fundamental Christian?”
- He said “I’m a pre-Trib Acts 9 mid Acts Dispensational Fundamental Christian.”
- I said “So am I.” And we agreed to exchange our kids for the summer.
- I said “Are you a 12 in or 12 out pre-Trib Acts 9 mid Acts Dispensational Fundamental Christian?”
- He said “I’m a 12 in pre-Trib Acts 9 mid Acts Dispensational Fundamental Christian.”
- I said “You heretic!” And I pushed him off the bridge.

So, there is a lot of debate on this issue. Now, I hope no one tries to push me off the bridge after today’s sermon. I think as we get into this issue, the important thing for us to remember is that the details are not the main issues. No matter which perspective we come from, we all believe that Jesus is coming back and he is establishing the Kingdom of God; we will be transformed into the resurrection bodies; and the creation will be renewed.

I am going on with a little more details today and I am staking out a position on this issue. I want to challenge your thoughts on this. I want to see where you got what you believe; but I am going to say right from the get-go that you don’t have to agree with me on everything. But, I want your position to be grounded in Scripture as I believe mine is. Let go.

Read Mark 13:1-37

There’s a lot of stuff here. I want to look at (1) what Jesus said about the temple; (2) what Jesus said about his second coming; and (3) what Jesus said we should do in the mean time.

II. First, What Jesus Said about the Temple.

This whole passage starts off by the disciples being awed by the temple. This temple was pretty awesome. The original temple was built by King Solomon according to the plan God gave King David. It was built around 10th Century BC. It was destroyed by the Babylonians during the Jewish Exiles. King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it around 586 BC. After the Persians (Iranians) beat up on the Babylonians (Iraqis), the Jewish remnants were allowed to come back and rebuild the temple. We know that the temple was rebuilt around 537-516 BC. About 500 years later, the temple was again in ruins, and King Herod rebuilt/renovated the temple from 20BC to 63 AD. Most of the work had been done in the earlier years; so, by the time Jesus came around, it was magnificent! The sheer size of the temple was amazing. Some of the stones in the temple were over a hundred tons. Take a look (show rendered pictures of the Herod's Temple) at some of the renderings of what is commonly referred to as the Second Temple or Herod's Temple, the temple that the disciples commented on in verse 1. This is what it looks like now (show picture of current temple mount).

Jesus said in verse 2, "Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone one will be thrown down." The disciples were probably really shocked by what Jesus said. What? This is the symbol of our pride. It is our hope. This temple demonstrates the presence of God among our people. It is the temple

When Jesus was sitting on Mount Olive (which overlooks the temple), Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him when the temple will be destroyed and the signs of when that will happen.

It's really important to understand the set up for this first part of this discourse. There is a lot of debate about whether Jesus is talking about the destruction of the temple or the second coming. There is no doubt that Jesus is talking about the second coming in the later part of the discourse. But, in the beginning, I believe Jesus is answering the question that the disciples asked him: it's about the destruction of the temple.

First, he already predicted that the temple will be destroyed. This was literally fulfilled in 70 AD when the Roman general Titus and his army conquered Jerusalem. Titus ordered his men to preserve the temple, but the building was gutted by a fire set by one of his soldiers. As a result, the general ordered the temple and the city totally destroyed. The Romans dismantled every stone in the building to get to the gold that

melted into the cracks during the fire. Today, there is not a single stone left from the great temple Herod built. This is often referred to as the Jewish Diaspora. This is when they lost their land only to reclaim it after World War II about 50 years ago.

Second, Jesus told his disciples the sign of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. You have to remember that this conversation took place at around 30 AD, and the Book of Mark was written around 50 AD or possibly before because we have fragments of the book of Mark carbon dated to about 50 AD.

So, what were some of the signs?

Claim of false Messiahs (v. 6)--Josephus, the Jewish historian writing in the first century (and he was not a Christian), testifies that this period was full of those claiming to be the messiah. Even the book of Acts speaks of a few of them. In the climate of political unrest that filled Israel in those days, there were many opportunistic men who deceived many.

Wars and rumors of wars (vs. 7, 8) - Three different emperors threatened war against Jerusalem during this time - Caligula, Claudius and Nero. There were also several internal Jewish civil wars during this time.

Famines and Earthquakes (vs. 8) - There were a number of documented famines and earthquakes during this period, including the one predicted by Agabus in Acts 11:28 (about 44 A.D.). Others include the years 46,51,60,62.

Persecution (vs. 9, 11)- The book of Acts catalogues plenty of these on its own. Nero started the Great Fire of Rome and blamed the Christians for it around 64 AD. Christians were fed to the lions at the Colusium and even used as torches for Nero's garden party.

Gospel preached to the whole world (vs. 10) - This verse is often used to "prove" that this section must refer to Jesus' second coming instead of the destruction of Jerusalem. The phrase "the whole world," is the word "*oikoumene*" and means the "inhabited known world." This was quite different than what we think of. Remember, we

have to put ourselves back into the New Testament world to know what this meant. We would include places like Russia, Japan, Hawaii, South America, in our definition of the inhabited known world. They would not. To them, the inhabited known world was essentially the Roman Empire (which was vast but far from the whole world).

In other words, Jesus was not saying that the Gospel would be preached to every person on the earth, but that the Gospel would reach all known nations. The bottom line is this. Paul claimed that the Gospel had reached the *oikoumene* before 70 A.D. (Romans 1:8, 10:18, 16:26, Colossians 1:6,23).

Family betraying each other (v. 12)—Historian Josephus tells us about the seizure in Jerusalem. The Jews rebelled against the Roman Rule in 66 AD and the Romans just seized the city around 68 AD and blocked it off for before they burned it in 70AD. During those years, Josephus tells us that there were dead bodies everywhere in the city, hundreds of thousands of people suffered and died. As people were starving, people turned ugly and brutal and brothers turned against brothers. Later, there were cannibalism where mothers would cook and eat their own children.

The “abomination that causes desolation” standing where it does not belong (v. 14) – that’s when the warning is given for them to flee to safety. This phrase comes from Daniel. In Daniel 11:31, it says: “His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then, they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.” At the heart of the temple was the Holy of Holies. It is the place where God dwelt. And at this place, the prophecy of Daniel was that it will be desecrated by foreign sacrifices. This prophecy was fulfilled in 167 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes, commanding the invading army entered the Temple. He murdered worshipers, allowed his troops to have sex with women in the Temple and slaughtered a pig in the Holy of Holies. Every Jews knew about this. That’s where the story of Hanukah comes from. It was in response to this abomination that causes desolation that Jews attacked back and took the city again only to get attack again later.

And Jesus said that was going to happen again. Josephus tells us that Zealots who had taken over the temple ground desecrated the temple by allowing criminals to go and out of the Holy of Holies. At one time, The zealots made fun of the high priest by reenacting what the high priest did in the Holy of Holies comically. In response to this

action, the retired high priest Ananus, with tears, lamented (according to Josephus): “It would have been far better for me to have died before I have seen the house of God laden with such abominations and its unapproachable and hallowed places crowded with the feet of murderers.”

When Christians saw this abomination that causes desolation, they remembered Jesus’ words, and fled to the mountains, specifically to a City of Perea called Pella. Even Josephus wrote that the church in Jerusalem fled in response to a revelation. Eusebius, a Christian historian writing in the 300s, wrote that the Christians in Jerusalem left the city specifically because of what Jesus had commanded right here.

How dreadful it would be in those days (v. 17) -- Josephus describes some of the horrors that took place during the destruction of Jerusalem:

- people’s cries were louder than the fighting
- Jewish soldiers tormented their own people for food.
- thousands of crucifixions
- horrid famine and piles of dead bodies
- the burning of Jerusalem
- fire quenched by blood
- 1,100,00 Jews died and 97,000 taken captive
- The armies took the city, entered the Temple, tore every stone down to the ground.

The point is that these verses so far referred to the destruction of Jerusalem. If they referred to the second coming, why were people commanded to flee to the Judean hills? Could they escape from the Second Coming? No. The Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding area in 68 A.D. (Just about 35 years) took heed to this warning, and they did in fact flee.

Now, imagine Jesus, knowing what’s going to happen in Jerusalem, looking at the temple and responding to his disciples and giving them a reality dose! Imagine his heart at this time knowing that his disciples will go through this suffering.

Then, Jesus goes on to talk about the second coming, which we’ll talk about in a moment. But, notice that the event of the second coming is spectacular and everyone will

see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. That refers to the second coming. However, what he says in verses 28-30 refers to the sign that he has been talking about: mainly verses 5-23:

He says in verses 28-30:

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: as soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near (fig trees shed leaves during winter and is one of the latest trees to come back with green leaves in Spring). Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.”

It means that what he has been talking about in verses 5-23 will happen during their life time. And indeed, it did happen during their life time. It couldn't be referring to the second coming (the sun darkening and Jesus coming back on the cloud) because that's not the sign; that's when it is happening. So, the sign is what happened in the destruction of the temple. That will happen in the lifetime of the disciples.

III. Second, Let's Go on the What Jesus Says About His Second Coming.

Two things we find in this passage:

A. When he comes, everyone is going to know. There is no secret coming. Isn't that clear from this passage? The sun and moon darkened, stars falling. I am not sure if this is literal or metaphorical since this is apocryphal literature where there are a lot of symbolisms and metaphors. But, the point is that it is going to be spectacular. Everyone is going to know. We will all see him coming in the clouds in power and glory. So, I am not sure if the view that the believers will be secretly raptured is correct. No Christian that we know of have ever espoused this view until around 1830 when a theologian named Darby proposed this view. It became very popularized by songs like “You've been left behind” or the fictional series, “the Left Behind Series” by Tim LaHaye. The only explicit support for this view comes from 1 Thess 4:16-17:

16For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17After that, we who are still alive and are left

will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

And so we will be with the Lord forever.

The word translated as “caught up” is this Greek word: “*harpozo*” and the Latin equivalent to this word is *rapare*, and that’s where we get the term rapture. The word *harpozo* is meant to describe how a leading citizen of a town will go out of town to meet with an important dignitary and escort them into town. F.F. Bruce, one of the great biblical scholars of our time, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, one of the most reputable and biblically accurate commentaries, says:

So Cicero, describing Julius Caesar’s progress through Italy in 49 B.C., says, “Just imagine what ἀπαντήσεις he is receiving from the towns, what honors are paid to him!”, and five years later he says much the same about Caesar’s adopted son Octavian: “The municipalities are showing the boy remarkable favor.... Wonderful ἀπαντήσεις and encouragement!”

This word is also used in the parable in Matt 25:6 where the brides go out to meet the groom late at night and also in Acts 28:15 when Christians in Rome meet with Paul outside of Rome and walk to Rome together with him.

The point is that we are not caught up in the cloud in a secret rapture but in a very public rapture, with loud voices, trumpets, sun and moon and stars affected, he comes down in the cloud and we, the believers, are *harpozoed* up in the cloud to meet him in the air to welcome him back to earth where a new heaven and new earth is established.

B. No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. It’s an amazing statement of humility on the part of Jesus: he says he does not know when the Second Coming will be. He doesn’t know when he is coming back. Sometimes we read the passage with the assumption that Jesus must know when he is coming back. But, he said he doesn’t.

Throughout history, people have come back with calculations of when Jesus is going to come back based on secret codes and formulas they said they found in the Bible.

But, we are told not to do that.

IV. Third, Let’s Go to What Jesus Told Us We SHOULD do in the mean time.

In verse 33 on, Jesus said:

“33Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. 34It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

35"Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' "

We see words like: be on guard, be alert, keep watch, do not let him find you sleeping, watch. What does it mean? He says it's like a man going way: he leaves his house and puts his servants in charge and gives them an assigned task.

God has left us in charge of his house, his things. Remember, the sermon a few weeks ago, it's all his, not ours. And he has called us to used what he has given us to do the work that he has given us to do: what is that? To love God and to love others, and to share and live out the gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone to the ends of the earth.

The Scripture tells us in1 Thessalonians 5:2, "For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.”

It's will be the opposite of popular thought. There will be no predictions for it.

V. Conclusion

I know that for some of you, I have turned your thinking of the second coming upside down. For years, perhaps, you have looked at the early verses of Mark 13 and thought they applied to the second coming. One thing I want you to know. This is an important issue, but not essential. Good Christians disagree over the interpretation of this passage.

How are preparing for the Second Coming?

Titus 2:11-13 says, "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God, while we look forward to that wonderful event when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed."

Human nature is such that we procrastinate.

If you really anticipate the coming of Jesus, you will probably be preparing all the time.

But are you ready? God has given us everything we need to be ready. All we need is His grace extended in Jesus. We can't be ready on our own. We aren't good enough. But God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to live among us, to die for our sins, to raise from the dead, conquering the power of death. And He invites you to receive what He did for you. He wants to make you clean and ready for His return, for the end of the age as we know it.