

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
10-30-24

Mark 13

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times – Verses 1-2

¹ As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” ² “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

13:1-2 About 15 years before Jesus was born (20 B.C.), Herod the Great began to remodel and rebuild the temple, which had stood for nearly 500 years since the days of Ezra (Ezra 6:14-15). Herod made the temple one of the most beautiful buildings in Jerusalem— not to honor God, but to appease the Jews whom he ruled. The magnificent building project was not completely finished until A.D. 64. Jesus’ prophecy that not one stone would be left on another was fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the Romans completely destroyed the temple and the entire city of Jerusalem.

Jesus’ Prediction Brings Up Two Questions In The Minds Of His Disciples – Verses 3-4

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

13:3-4 The disciples wanted to know when the temple would be destroyed. Jesus gave them a prophetic picture of that time, including events leading up to it. He also talked about future events connected with his return to earth to judge all people. Jesus predicted both near and distant events without putting them in chronological order. Some of the disciples lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This event would assure them that everything else Jesus predicted would also happen. Jesus warned his followers about the future so that they could learn how to live in the present. Many predictions Jesus made in this passage have not yet been fulfilled. He did not make them so that we would guess when they might be fulfilled, but to help us to be spiritually alert and prepared at all times as we wait for his return.

13:3-4 The Mount of Olives rises above Jerusalem to the east. From its slopes a person can look down into the city and see the temple. Zechariah 14: 1-4 predicts that the Messiah will stand on this very mountain when he returns to set up his eternal kingdom.

Jesus describes world conditions during between His Ascension Second Coming – Verses 5-8

⁵ Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁸ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

13:5-7 What are the signs of the end times? There have been people in every generation since Christ’s resurrection claiming to know exactly when Jesus would return. No one has been right yet,

however, because Christ will return on God's timetable, not ours. Jesus predicted that before his return, many believers would be misled by false teachers claiming to have revelations from God.

13:8 According to Scripture, one clear sign of Christ's return will be his unmistakable appearance in the clouds, which will be seen by all people (13:26; Revelation 1:7). In other words, you do not have to wonder whether a certain person is the Messiah or whether these are the "end times." When Jesus returns, you will know beyond a doubt, because it will be evident to all true believers. Beware of groups who claim special knowledge of Christ's return because no one knows when that time will be (13:32). Be cautious about saying, "This is it!" but be bold in your total commitment to have your heart and life ready for Christ's return.

Jesus Describes What His Disciples Must Expect During The Time Between His Ascension And Second Coming – Verses 9-13

⁹ "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. ¹¹ Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ¹³ Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

13:9-11 As the early church began to grow, most of the disciples experienced the kind of persecution Jesus was talking about. Since the time of Christ, Christians have been persecuted in their own lands and on foreign mission fields. Though you may be safe from persecution now, your vision of God's kingdom must not be limited by what happens only to you. A glance at a newspaper will reveal that many Christians in other parts of the world daily face hardships and persecution. Persecutions are an opportunity for Christians to witness for Christ to those opposed to him. God's desire is that the gospel be proclaimed to everyone in spite of persecution.

13:11 Jesus was teaching the kind of attitude we should have when we must take a stand for the gospel. We don't have to be fearful or defensive about our faith because the Holy Spirit will be present to give us the right words to say.

13:13 To believe in Jesus and stand firm to the end will take perseverance because our faith will be challenged and opposed. Severe trials will sift true Christians from fair-weather believers. Enduring to the end does not earn salvation for us but marks us as already saved. The assurance of our salvation will keep us strong in times of persecution.

The Abomination Of Desolation, Spoken Of By Daniel – Verses 14-19

¹⁴ "When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation'^[a] standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. ¹⁶ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁷ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ¹⁸ Pray that this will not take place in winter, ¹⁹ because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again.

13:14 The "abomination that causes desolation" refers to the desecration of the temple by God's enemies. This happened repeatedly in Israel's history: in 597 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar looted the temple and took Judean captives to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36); in 168 B.C. when Antiochus

Epiphanes sacrificed a pig to Zeus on the sacred temple altar (Daniel 9: 27; 11:30-31); in A.D. 70 when the Roman general Titus placed an idol on the site of the burned-out temple after the destruction of Jerusalem. Just a few years after Jesus gave this warning, in A.D. 38, the emperor Caligula made plans to put his own statue in the temple, but he died before this could be carried out.

13:17-19 Some Christian couples who are contemplating pregnancy have been discouraged by this verse. They wonder if kids should be brought into a world filled with sin, evil, and terror. Jesus was not making a general warning against pregnancy, however. Many times in history have had risks and drawbacks; no place or time is perfect. We must remember that God will look out for the welfare of our children as he has looked out for us.

The Great Tribulation – Verses 20-23

²⁰ “If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. ²¹ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. ²² For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³ So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

13:20-23 The “elect” are God’s chosen people, those who are saved. See Romans 8:29-30 and Ephesians 1:4-5 for more on God’s choice. Is it possible for Christians to be deceived? Yes. So convincing will be the arguments and proofs from deceivers in the end times that it will be difficult not to fall away from Christ. If we are prepared, Jesus says, we can remain faithful. But if we are not prepared, we will turn away. To penetrate the disguises of false teachers we can ask: (1) Have their predictions come true, or do they have to revise them to fit what’s already happened? (2) Does any teaching utilize a small section of the Bible to the neglect of the whole? (3) Does the teaching contradict what the Bible says about God? (4) Are the practices meant to glorify the teacher or Christ? (5) Do the teachings promote hostility toward other Christians?

On The Heels Of Great Tribulation: The Return Of Jesus Christ – Verses 24-27

²⁴ “But in those days, following that distress, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁶ “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

13:24 In those days, after that tribulation: Jesus said that the cosmic catastrophes He described here would happen in those days, the days connected with that tribulation. The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall: Immediately before the return of Jesus, before His coming in the clouds with great power and glory, the world will be wracked by cosmic catastrophes. In a sense, this will be the groaning of all creation (Romans 8:22) and it will come to one last crescendo before the return of Jesus.

13:27 He will send His angels, and gather together His elect: When Jesus returns to this earth after that tribulation, He will come with the saints in heaven and to gather those who have come to Jesus during the tribulation and have survived.

Jesus Speaks More Regarding The Timing Of These Events – Verses 28-31

²⁸ “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. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

13:28-31 The truth that heaven and earth will disappear is all that much more believable in our age of nuclear power and terrorism. Jesus tells us, however, that even though the earth will pass away, the truth of his words will never be changed or abolished. God and his Word provide the only stability in our unstable world. How shortsighted people are who spend all their time and energy learning about this temporary world and accumulating its possessions, while neglecting the Bible and its eternal truths!

The Day and Hour Unknown – Verses 32-37

³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their 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. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

13:32 When Jesus said that even he did not know the time of the end, he was affirming his humanity. Of course God the Father knows the time, and Jesus and the Father are one. But when Jesus became a man, he voluntarily gave up the unlimited use of his divine attributes. The emphasis of this verse is not on Jesus’ lack of knowledge, but rather on the fact that no one knows. It is God the Father’s secret to be revealed when he wills. No one can predict by Scripture or science the exact day of Jesus’ return. Jesus is teaching that preparation, not calculation, is needed.

13:33-34 Months of planning go into a wedding, the birth of a baby, a career change, a speaking engagement, the purchase of a home. Do you place the same importance on preparing for Christ’s return, the most important event in your life? Its results will last for eternity. You dare not postpone your preparations because you do not know when his return will occur. The way to prepare is to study God’s Word and live by its instructions each day. Only then will you be ready.

13:35-37 Mark 13 tells us how to live while we wait for Christ’s return: (1) We are not to be misled by confusing claims or speculative interpretations of what will happen (13:5-6). (2) We should not be afraid to tell people about Christ, despite what they might say or do to us (13:9-11). (3) We must stand firm by faith and not be surprised by persecution (13:13). (4) We must be morally alert, obedient to the commands for living found in God’s Word. This chapter was not given to promote discussions on prophetic timetables, but to stimulate right living for God in a world where he is largely ignored.