

1. **Introduction**: Chapter 13 is the Olivet Discourse in which Jesus privately tells the disciples about the coming destruction of the Temple and future events associated with “End Times.”
  - As Tuesday of Passion Week was ending (new day begins at sundown), Jesus and the disciples left the Temple through the eastern gate and walked to the Mount of Olives where they sat down, and Jesus instructed them about near and far-term coming events.
  - As they left the Temple, a disciple mentioned the majesty of the Temple.
  - To their surprise, Jesus then referred to a disastrous fate for the Temple.
2. **Mark 13:1-2**: *“And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”<sup>2</sup> 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.”*
  - Why did Jesus respond to a comment about the majesty of the Temple in this way? From the tenor of the entire discourse, we can see that Jesus is training His disciples, preparing them for future difficulties and events.
  - The extent of the disruptions to be experienced is typified by the truth that the magnificent Temple they have just visited will be destroyed.
  - The Temple was a majestic symbol of Israel and its God. Jews came from all over the Empire to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. The Temple was the only place where sacrifices to God were made. Would God truly allow it to be destroyed?
  - Jesus and the disciples knew the Temple intimately. Jesus’ comment about its coming destruction shocked the disciples.
  - The comments were in the context of Jesus’ contentious interactions with Temple rulers - Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, chief priests, and Herodians.
  - The attitude and actions of these powerful people were offensive to Jesus.
  - The different groups were usually at odds with one another, but they were united in opposition to Jesus and their desire to be rid of Him.
  - Temple activities were overseen by the rulers. They permitted money-changers and animal merchants in the outer courtyard of the Temple. Having animals in the courtyard was a loud, messy, and smelly business.
  - Visitors from distant areas could not bring their own animals, so the availability of animals for sacrifice was viewed as a necessity. The only money permitted for use in the Temple was Temple Shekels. Money-changers met the Temple-Shekel need of worshippers.
  - Jesus saw both activities as perversions of the Temples’ purpose of worship and drove them out of the Temple courtyard. Temple rulers were not pleased by this disruption of activities they had approved. To them, it was another example of Jesus interference.
  - Jesus’ successful ministry and His opposition to the rulers made the leaders increasingly anxious to rid themselves of the problem-maker.

- The disciples were certainly aware of these issues and perhaps were concerned about the friction Jesus was causing.
  - Their comments about the magnificence of the Temple could have been to get Jesus' thinking positively about the Temple and its functions.
  - Temple destroyed? Unthinkable! They had not yet grasped that God's Temple in the coming era would be the hearts of His people.
3. **Herod's Temple:** The magnificence of Herod's Temple was so great it is difficult to imagine. In about 20 BC Herod had set out to reconstruct the Temple complex. He tore down the existing Temple and built a new one.
- He increased the size of the Temple courtyards from about 17 acres to about 36 acres. Retaining walls about 16 feet thick were built to the south and west to hold fill that would make the new area level with the old.
  - Enormous limestone blocks were used in the Temple complex. The stones varied in weight from about 4 tons to over 600 tons. The new Temple was completed in about 1 ½ years.
  - Construction of courtyard buildings took longer but was mostly complete in about 8 years. Some finishing work continued until 63 AD.
  - The astounding size of some of the Temple stones raises the question of how they were quarried and moved into place in the walls?
  - Marble and gold were lavishly used in finishing the Temple building.
  - From a distance, the white limestone of the Temple was so bright that it gave the illusion of snow. The roof was cedar beams covered with gold.
  - Portions of the walls of the 150-foot-tall Temple were covered with gold.
  - Jesus said it would all be destroyed. How could such a huge structure protected by the city walls be destroyed? It took a massive effort, but the Romans did destroy the Temple and much of the city in 70 AD.
  - In 66 AD the Jews revolted against the Romans. In April of 70 AD, four legions (about 20,000 men) under Titus besieged Jerusalem.
  - In Jerusalem, about 1 million Jews were killed, and the Temple was burned and pulled down. Israel ceased to exist as a nation.
  - In the fire, gold on the walls melted and ran into the crevices between the smooth-cut stones. Later, to get the gold, the stones were pulled apart.
  - The Roman Emperor ordered the Temple and the city walls to be pulled down except for the 3 highest towers and the western wall of the city.
  - Some large stones in the Temple retaining walls, mostly at the southwestern corner of the courtyard platform, were left in place.
  - **Mark 13:3-4:** *“And as he (Jesus and the disciples) sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup> “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”*

- Jesus and the disciples left the city by the eastern gate and walked to the Mount of Olives (rises 300 feet above the city) where they sat down facing, and looking down, on the Temple. The view was stunning!
  - Surprisingly, the disciples didn't ask "why" or "how." They wanted to know "when."
  - They seemed to believe the Temple's destruction would signal the end of the age. No doubt the disciples vividly recalled the devastating effect on Israel when Babylon destroyed the second Temple in 586 BC.
  - That was a time of national judgment, destruction, and exile. Will the same sort of catastrophe result if Herod's Temple is destroyed? If so, what will become of Israel and the Jews?
  - They asked Jesus, ***"when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?"***
  - Their concern for the bigger picture within which the Temple is destroyed is indicated by the phrase "these things" and verified by Jesus' later comments related to End Times.
  - **End Times:** As He continued to talk, Jesus moved from the focus on the destruction of the Temple to the broader picture of End-Time events.
  - End-Time events are a contentious subject among Christian denominations.
  - Since Christian hope is focused more on the coming age than on the present age, it is not surprising that End-Time doctrine is a serious topic.
  - A lot can be (and is) said about End Times. What is said should always be said humbly and cautiously.
  - Understanding End-Time prophecy involves significant interpretation difficulties. The general subject is Eschatology (doctrine of last things).
  - The symbols of End-Time revelation are often difficult to interpret.
  - As for speculation about the time of Christ's return, Jesus declared that no one, save the Father, knows the day and hour of His coming again.
4. **Interpretation of End-Time Prophecy:** Interpretive schemes for End-Time prophecies vary from "all the prophecies have already been fulfilled" to "almost everything remains to be fulfilled in the future."
- We will follow a middle-of-the-road approach. Some things (destruction of Herod's Temple) have been fulfilled; others remain to be fulfilled.
5. **Mark 13:5-8:** *And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. <sup>7</sup> And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. <sup>8</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.*
- Remember, Jesus is speaking to the disciples in private as they sit looking at the Temple.

- Jesus warns the disciples that after the time of His death and resurrection, danger to the faith will arise. He says, *“See that no one leads you astray.”* There will be continuing diverse attempts to lead followers astray.
- Many will claim to be “the Christ” and attempt to lead believers astray.
- As mentioned, the disciples seem to have assumed that destruction of the Temple would be a signal of End Times. But Jesus says not everything that might seem like a sign of the end of the age is such a sign.
- Wars and rumors of wars are common to the human situation. They are not signals that the end is near. Jesus made this comment during the long Roman Peace (about 200 years) that would soon come to an end.
- Jewish Zealots rebelled against Rome in 66 AD. Emperor Nero committed suicide June 68 AD. Turmoil and upset came to the Empire.
- In 69 AD there were 4 Emperors in a single year, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian (the general in charge of the Jewish war). Vespasian’s son Titus replaced him to continue the Jewish war.
- In 70 AD Jerusalem fell to Titus. The Temple was destroyed. About one million Jews were killed. Wars inevitably will happen.
- Wars don’t necessarily signal the End. Even shaking the powerful Roman Empire didn’t rise to the level of a sign of the Lord’s return.
- In the centuries since the fall of Rome, nations have continued to rise against nations, and kingdoms against kingdoms.
- Natural catastrophes like earthquakes, floods, and famines will occur, but as bad as they may be, they are not signs of the end.
- War, even huge massacres, are but beginnings of End Time birth pains.
- Such disasters are like stepping-stones. By means of them the end is both foreshadowed and brought nearer.
- As the end draws near, wars, man-made disasters, and natural disasters will be more frequent, extensive, and of greater magnitude. This points toward the end of the age but does not signal that it is immediate.
- The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple were historical events as well as a type and foreshadowing of the final disaster.
- Jesus doesn’t seem to intend to provide a time-table or blueprint for the future. He seems to exhort the disciples and future readers of the discourse to be steadfast in the faith.
- The task of believers is faithfulness in the present time even in the face of trials, adversity, and suffering. The End will come but no one knows when.