

1. **Introduction:** Last lesson we ended with Jesus privately teaching His disciples as they sat on the Mount of Olives facing the Temple. The disciples were shocked at the thought the Temple would be destroyed. It was massive and solid and surrounded by the city walls.
2. **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,** ⁴ **“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”**
 - The disciples seemed to think the Temple’s destruction might be a signal for the end of the age. No doubt the disciples vividly recalled the devastating effect on Israel when Babylon destroyed the first Temple in 586 BC.
 - The first Temple’s destruction was a time of national judgment, destruction, and exile.
 - Will the same sort of catastrophe for Israel be the result if Herod’s Temple is destroyed? If so, what will become of Israel and the Jews?
 - But the question the disciples raised about the Temple’s destruction was not “why” or “how,” or what will be the consequences. They simply asked “when” and what “sign?”
 - 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 extended to the bigger picture of which the destruction of the Temple would be only the beginning. Jesus shifted to 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 contentious.
 - Much can be (and is) said about End Times. End time discussion should always be said humbly, cautiously, and backed by Scripture.
 - The general subject is Eschatology (doctrine of last things).
 - Understanding End-Time prophecy involves significant interpretation difficulties.
 - Symbols used in End-Time revelation are difficult to interpret.
 - Speculation about the time of Christ’s return is useless. Jesus declared that no one, save the Father, knows the day and hour of His coming again.
3. **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 (like the destruction of Herod’s Temple) have been fulfilled; others remain to be fulfilled.
4. **Mark 13:5-8:** ***And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. ⁷ And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸ 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.***

- Jesus, speaking about the time after His death and resurrection, says danger to the faith of His followers will arise. One threat will be from people who 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, not necessarily signals that the end is near.
- Jesus made this comment during the long Roman Peace (27 BC-189AD) that would soon come to an end. Nero, who was then Emperor, was an evil man.
- Those opposed to Nero acted to dispose of him. The Roman senator, Vindex rebelled. He was supported by Galba who would soon become Emperor.
- Nero was declared a public enemy and condemned to death in absentia. He fled Rome, and on 9 June AD 68 committed suicide.
- His death sparked a brief period of Roman civil war known as the Year of the Four Emperors. Turmoil and upset came to the Empire.
- Jewish Zealots had rebelled against Rome in 66 AD. After Nero committed suicide, there were 4 Emperors in the following year - Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian (the general in charge of the Jewish war).
- Vespasian’s son Titus was appointed to continue the war.
- In April of 70 AD, four legions (about 20,000 men) under Titus besieged Jerusalem. In August, they broke into the city. About 1 million Jews were killed, the Temple was destroyed with much of the city.
- Israel ceased to exist as a nation, and Rome renamed the land, Palestine.
- Wars inevitably will happen but don’t necessarily signal the End.
- In the centuries since the Temple’s destruction, nations have continued to rise against nations, and kingdoms against kingdoms.
- Natural catastrophes like earthquakes, floods, and famines 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 would be historical events as well as a type and foreshadowing of the final disaster.
- Jesus doesn’t provide a time-table or blueprint for the future. His focus is on exhorting the disciples and future followers to be steadfast in the faith.
- The task of believers is to be faithful in the present time even in the face of trials, adversity, and suffering. The End will come but no one knows when.

- The present age will end, but God remains in sovereign control.
 - “God’s will” prevails. The ultimate outcome will be that Christ will come again. There will be a new heaven and earth. Christ will rule His kingdom of the righteous redeemed.
 - Believers cannot change these events, but with God’s help they can be faithful to the One who has redeemed them. That is their task.
 - The greatest threat to believers comes from within. False christs will come, referring to all who, though they claim to speak in Jesus’ name, teach things Jesus did not teach and fail to teach what He did teach.
 - The false christs each have a story, but none presents the Biblical Jesus.
 - Other threats will come like natural catastrophes and wars. The believers and nonbelievers alike will suffer. Though to many, these things will be seen as signals of the end, they are only types and paradigms of the end.
 - The task for the disciples and for all believers is to persevere through the various trials that must be faced.
5. **Mark 13:9**: *“But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them.”*
- Threats to faith will include false christs and persecution.
 - Believers must be on their guard, must be clear in their own minds that persecution is not something that might happen but something that will happen. Persecution of believers will be the norm.
 - Believers will be persecuted by both Gentiles and Jews, by religious and secular authorities. Suffering will not be in vain. Believers who stand fast in the faith under persecution will develop greater steadfastness.
6. **Mark 13:10-11**: *“And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹ And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.”*
- God has always intended Gentiles to be included in the gospel. For the benefit of those to be redeemed, all the nations must hear the gospel.
 - Authentic gospel proclamation will be resisted and those who proclaim it will be subject to persecution. Authentic gospel preaching separates believers from unbelievers.
 - Believers are to trust God will give them grace to finish their service in His name, even to the point of supplying the words they need. In suffering God speaks by the Holy Spirit.
7. **Mark 13:12-13**: *“And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”*
- When governing authorities oppose believers, the pressure they apply will cause family members to reveal to authorities those in the family who are believers even when the penalty for being a believer is death.
 - In the Neronian persecution of 64 AD, anyone admitting to be a Christian was arrested and interrogated seeking identity of other Christians.

- Neither kinship nor suffering must take precedence over commitment to Jesus Christ.
 - Believers cannot overcome every adversary but can choose to remain steadfast in faith.
 - The temptation to deny Christ may be strong, but Jesus says that those who persevere to the end (end of their life) will be saved.
 - That promise is a supreme comfort during severe trials.
8. **Mark 13:14-18:** *“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. ¹⁵ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, ¹⁶ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁷ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸ Pray that it may not happen in winter.”*
- “The abomination of desolation” triggers a specific disaster.
 - This is an enigmatic saying. Jesus foresees a powerful opponent arising, an Antichrist, who would at some future date bring terrible tribulation to believers. That tribulation will end in the return of the Lord.
 - 2 Thessalonians 2 seems to be a parallel description.
 - Mark 13:14 then links *“these things”* (relating to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD) to with *“those days”* (relating to End Times).
 - The *“abomination that causes desolation”* alludes both to fulfillment in the destruction of the Temple and to the ultimate fulfillment in the advent of the Antichrist and the final tribulation before the return of Christ.
 - We all tend to want a “foolproof” date for the end. The disciples asked for a sign (meaning a clear indication) of when these things would occur.
 - But Jesus said no one knows the time except the Father. There is no path to accurately predicting the precise time of Christ’s return.
 - Certain knowledge would mean relief from the responsibility of waiting and watching. Salvation is not based on what we know. Be on guard!
 - The approach of the Roman army in 70 AD was a warning to flee the coming disaster.
 - Many, rather than fleeing, entered Jerusalem to celebrate Passover expecting to be safe.
 - Romans let them enter but then surrounded the city and let no one leave.
 - Extra people in the city used up food supplies fast, causing starvation for many. Having many non-combatants within the city walls produced other problems. In total, about one million Jews were killed in the siege.
 - Likewise, there will be signs of the impending disaster before the Tribulation. Flee to the safety of Christ.