

The Gospel According to Mark - The End of Time

August 11, 2019
The End Of Time
Mark 13:1-8

"I can't go back to the beginning, I can't control what tomorrow will bring But I know here in the middle is a place where you promise to be" What a powerful lyric! So many times we spend our time mired in the past, or worried about the future, but God wants us to know He is right here with us in the now, the present, today! We can certainly learn from the past and we can plan and prepare for the future, but we can only live today! We are going to look at a very intriguing passage today and in the coming weeks, where Jesus talks about the end times, but we're going to discover His teaching has tremendous implications for our lives today! Let's pray and ask for His anointing, and His presence to inspire us to live our lives in a way that prepares us for His coming. Let's pray!

Our Scripture this morning is found in Mark 13:1-8.

Mark 13:1 As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

Mark 13:2 "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

Mark 13:3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,

Mark 13:4 "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

Mark 13:5 Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you.

Mark 13:6 Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many.

Mark 13:7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

Mark 13:8 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.

So here's the picture: Jesus and the Disciples are leaving the temple and one of the guys points out to Jesus the massive stones and magnificent buildings that made up the temple complex. Jesus responds with a question and a statement concerning the fate of those earthly buildings, implying the whole complex will be destroyed. Then they walk over to the Mount of Olives opposite the temple and sit down to rest. The disciples have had a little time to ponder the words of Jesus and they've got questions, so they ask for further clarification. Jesus' reply references the end times and gives some pretty amazing details, even though the temple was destroyed before the end of time. Over the coming few weeks we will unpack these verses which are considered Apocalyptic writings. What is Apocalyptic? Glad you asked. If you look up the word on the internet you'll mainly get this definition...

"End of the world!" "Utter and complete destruction of the world"

But the word actually comes from the Greek word "ἀποκάλυψις" (ahpo ka loop sis) which means "revelation" or "an unveiling or unfolding of things not previously known."

The following definitions come from the Broadman Commentary on The Gospel of Mark and give us a much fuller meaning of the word.

APOCALYPTIC – "Language which is highly figurative, symbolic, and even extravagant."

APOCALYPTIC describes: "writings from God that employ symbolic language to tell of a divine intervention soon to take place."

"Apocalyptic means unveiling, or revelation and is a technical term for writings which claimed to offer a glimpse behind the curtain which veils the purposes and activities of God."

Apocalyptic writings in the Bible include: Daniel, Revelation, some of Joel, 2 Thessalonians, and the "Little Apocalypse" found here in Mark, Matthew and Luke.

So Jesus gets Apocalyptic with the disciples and they get really curious! And what do you think they most wanted Jesus to unveil or reveal to them about the end times? We're going to talk about that in just a minute, but first, we don't want to miss the subtle, yet not so subtle, practical message Jesus wanted to convey in this apocalyptic discourse.

A Practical Life Lesson For Today Based on a Future Event

Mark 13:1 As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

Mark 13:2 "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

What was the lesson for them back then?

We read these words in the Broadman Commentary

"Jesus' response must have been startling. The Temple was the center of worship of God for all of Israel: it seemed unreasonable that utter destruction could come upon so sacred and so apparently strong a place."

The temple had been under construction for over 50 yrs. Josephus, a Jewish historian, described some of the stones as 18 feet high and 40 feet long. You've got to wonder how they even moved stones that big without the heavy equipment we have today. The disciples would have known how they were put in place but were extremely puzzled at how they would so fully and catastrophically disassembled. How could that possibly happen? This kind of destruction would surely accompany the end of time. It did not. The temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. Only a few stones remain and form the Wailing Wall. And while Jesus used this imagery to speak of what would eventually happen to the temple and to discuss end times, Biblical Scholar Henry Turlington states...

"Jesus gave no precise blueprint of events, but He did see all too clearly the tragic end of the course being pursued by the Jewish leadership."

In other words, while Jesus was using Apocalyptic language and speaking of future events and realities, His words had very practical meaning and warnings for the people of His present day! Today, and over the coming weeks, we're going to study the "Little Apocalypse" but make no mistake about it, the practical application of the truths to be revealed or unveiled will be crucial to our daily lives. And what was the practical application for the Jewish people of Jesus' day? We talked about this a few weeks ago, how the Jewish people had made the mistake of trusting in the temple as apposed to trusting in God. They believed because they lived in the city which housed the temple of God, they could live any way they wanted, thinking God would not allow the city to be destroyed. They did not understand how God wanted people to worship Him from their hearts and not simply with motions of religiosity! They didn't understand that loving God was more about a relationship than a religion and that buildings were only a symbol of God's temple, not His dwelling place. It may have been that the only way for them to see the error of their ways was to remove the object of their affection, the temple. We read these powerful words in the Book of Acts...

Acts 7:48 "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says:

Acts 7:49 "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be?"

Acts 7:50 Has not my hand made all these things?"

Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

And we discover more insight when we look at Jesus' conversation with the Woman at the Well...

John 4:19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet.

John 4:20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

John 4:21 Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

John 4:22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

What is the lesson for us now?

Practically speaking, do you think people in our modern times also need to understand that the church is not a building, but the people of God, and that worship is not just something we do on Sunday morning, but should be a daily part of our personal relationship with God? Paul said this in Romans 12:1...

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

He puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 6:19...

1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

In our text, Jesus also used the conversation about the fate of the Temple as a springboard to talk about the end times. And now the answer to that question I asked you earlier about what the disciples wanted to know most concerning the end times. What do you think they wanted to know? Yep, they wanted to know when it was going to happen and what the signs were going to be to help them know it was coming!

The Disciples Question When will it be?

Mark 13:3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,

Mark 13:4 "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

Jesus didn’t tell them, but He did tell them that there would be many false signs, followed by some beginning signs:

Mark 13:5 Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you.

Mark 13:6 Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many.

Mark 13:7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

Mark 13:8 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.

Ray Steadman quoted a noted Jewish Christian scholar, Dr. Charles Feinberg, saying that “in the course of Israel’s history since the time of our Lord, sixty-four different individuals appeared claiming to be the Messiah.”

And then there’s been those who thought they had pinpointed the timing of the return of Jesus. People thought WWI was the end. Then WWII. Then the gulf war, because it was in the middle east. And people have wondered similar things about more recent conflicts in the Middle East. Some groups have gone so far as to predict the end of the world.

Jehovah’s Witnesses have projected end time events in 1874,1878,1881,1910,1914, 1918, 1925, 1975, 1984.

In 1988 a man named Edgar Whisenant sold over three million copies of a book titled, 88 Reasons Why The Rapture Could Be in 1988. When that didn’t happen he rewrote the book in 1989 and do you want to guess the title? 89 Reasons Why The Rapture Could Be in 1989. And people still bought it.

Batting average of those in history who’ve tried to pinpoint the second coming of Christ...

Zero

Let me ask you to consider some questions this morning. When it comes to end times, what question first comes to your mind? Concerning the end of time, what do you think is the most important question we as Christians should seek to answer? When you think of the end of time, what feelings and emotions do you experience? If someone were to ask you to help answer their questions on the end times, in which direction

would you take the conversation? Is the most important thing when it will happen or that we're ready when it happens?

The Scripture says we should know enough to not be caught off guard whenever it takes place. In fact Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5 these words...

1 Thess 5:1 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you,

1 Thess 5:2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

1 Thess 5:3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

1 Thess 5:4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

1 Thess 5:5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

1 Thess 5:6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. NIV

So we should be living our lives in such a way that we are fully aware of the signs that are pointing to the second coming of Christ, and be ready whenever it happens, but we are not told to spend all our time trying to pinpoint the day or the hour. Jesus said this about His second coming...

Matthew 24: 36 "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. NIV

Nothing wrong with studying Scriptures about the end times! I have a friend who has written a book on the topic and it's intriguing. But here's something to think about: What if we spend all our time trying to figure out exactly when Jesus is going to come back, rather than preparing for His return. What a tragedy that would be. Is our purpose on earth to figure out when Jesus is coming back and the details of the end times? Most definitely not!

Our God-given purpose as Christians is found in 2 Corinthians 5:14-20...

2 Cor 5:14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

2 Cor 5:15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Cor 5:16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Cor 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

2 Cor 5:19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Cor 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

So why is when the wrong question?

"Jesus makes clear that if you focus on 'When?' you are going to be misled and ultimately deceived."

Mark 13:5 Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you."

Here's the deal: If you are focused on trying to figure out all the particulars of end time prophecy you'll potentially fall prey to a false teacher who says they've got it all figured out! God's Word gives us a lot of information and enough information so we are not caught off-guard or by surprise when He does come, but it doesn't give us all the pieces to that puzzle. However, we are given great detail on how we are to live our lives as ambassadors for Christ! In fact, every detail you'll ever need to know about being an ambassador for Christ is found in the employee handbook (The Bible) and it's a pretty detailed job description!

Peter Hiatt wrote the following in his book on Revelation, titled, "Eternity Now."

"We ignore the Story and argue about the order of the pages in the book. We quarrel over which pages belong to the future or to the past, missing the Story and therefore living without the Plot – and therefore without its meaning for our lives now. If we don't know the Plot now, how can we know Him in the future?"

He is a person and He is Spirit.”

What is the story and what is the plot?

The story is Jesus yesterday, today and tomorrow!

History is His Story!

It's the story of God's desire to have a personal relationship with you and me.

It's the story of us rejecting God's overtures of friendship and His unwillingness to give up on us. It is the ultimate love story of all times. His love song is one of ultimate sacrifice where God sends His One and Only Son to die on a cross so anyone who would believe, and put their trust in Him as Savior would have life eternal! That's the story and leads to the plot of the story...

The plot is your life and mine!

How have we responded to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross?

Everything hinges on our personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and then how that effects our relationships with our fellow human beings!

It's back to the "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself! God has written an amazing story and given you and me very important roles in how the plot plays out!

So what should the questions be? Let's wrap up today's message by looking at two: Am I ready for Christ return? What should I do while I await His return?

Question #1: Am I Ready for His return?

Mat 24:37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Mat 24:38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

Mat 24:39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Mat 24:40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

Mat 24:41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Mat 24:42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

That passage scares some people, but it doesn't have to! If Jesus is your Savior then you should welcome His second coming. So what does it take to be ready from a salvation point of view?

Admit - you are a sinner in need of a Savior

Believe - Jesus died on the old rugged cross to be your Savior

Commit - Commit your heart and life to that Savior by calling on His Name

Do those things and as for as salvation is concerned, you'll be ready whenever Jesus returns! Paul puts it beautifully in Romans...

Rom 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Rom 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Rom 5:11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Then in verse 17 we read...

Rom 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man (Adam), death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

You see, if you're a child of God then God is your Heavenly Father and you don't have to fear your Heavenly Father! After Hurricane Katrina, we lived for about a year in the old Talisheek Baptist Church that had been closed. We had a neighbor who had 6 Children. One day the Dad came on and the two year old

boy, ran out to him and the dad picked him up and threw him over his back and walks into the house with the kid laughing and so excited to have dad home! When Jesus comes back, I wanna run out to meet him with that kind of excitement! Last question...

Question #2: What should I be doing while I await His return?

What does it take to be ready from a faithful servant point of view?

Mark 13:32 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Mark 13:33 Be on guard! Be alert ! You do not know when that time will come.

Mark 13:34 It'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.

Mark 13:35 "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.

Mark 13:36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

Mark 13:37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

Some people think that the advice to watch, means try to figure it all out or go to the mountains or the religious compound and wait for His return. Nothing could be further from the truth. He said watch, not wait! Watch is an action!

Watch out for the deception to do religious things rather than the things of God

Watch out for the temptation to adopt the world's philosophies rather than the truth of God

Watch out for the distractions (so busy doing other things you don't have time for the things of God)

Watch for Opportunities...

Mark 13:34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task...

Folks we have task to do!

We are to Share Christ love

We are to Worship by serving someone in need (least of these)

We are to Disciple and mentor a new believer

We are to Become all that Christ created us to become.

Mat 24:45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?

Mat 24:46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

Peter Hiatt said this in his book "Eternity Now"...

"I'll tell you this: The last place I want to be when Jesus comes back is sitting on a pile of food in a secret hideout holding a shotgun while people starve to death in the street."

The greatest and deepest spiritual truths are discovered as we learn to flesh out the Word of God in our lives by "Loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength and then loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Bottom Line

You don't have to know "when" if you're always ready!

Let's pray