

THE END

Mark 13:1-23



The Temple was a source of national pride for the Jews. It was one of the wonders of the Roman Empire. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote:

The exterior of the building wanted nothing that could astound either mind or eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white. Some of the stones in the building were forty-five cubits in length, five in height and six in breadth.¹

As we will see in this passage, the disciples were proud of the Temple, but Jesus revealed that the beauty of the Temple would be short lived.

Jesus and His disciples were in Jerusalem celebrating Passover 33AD. They were staying in the village of Bethany east of Jerusalem on the far side of the Mount of Olives. After a day of teaching in the Temple, Jesus and His disciples left the Temple to make their way to Bethany for the evening.

JESUS FORETOLD THE DESTRUCTION OF HEROD'S TEMPLE (13:1-2)

Mark 13:1-2 (ESV)

¹ And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" ² 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."

Our Lord's prophecy was literally fulfilled in 70AD by the Roman legions under the command of General Titus. Though he ordered the Temple be preserved, a soldier set it ablaze. To get at the melted gold, the legionnaires tore the Temple apart stone by stone.

Jesus and the disciples walked across the Kidron Valley up the slopes of the Mount of Olives some 150 feet above the height of the Temple Mount where Jesus sat down facing the Temple. Peter, James, John and Andrew came to Jesus with follow on questions about His prophecy.

Mark 13:3-4 (ESV)

³ And as he 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?"

Jesus had spoken about one thing – the destruction of the Temple. But the disciples asked about the timing and sign not of *this thing*, but *these things*. Based on Old

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 136.

Testament prophecies, devout Jews anticipated a time of divine judgment on the earth called the time of *Jacob's Trouble* that would bring this present age to an end and usher in the coming age of the Messiah and His Kingdom. It seems the disciples assumed the destruction of the Temple marked the end of this age and the beginning of the next.

This observation is important because Jesus' answer does not address the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. Rather, Jesus answers their question related to *when all these things are about to be accomplished*, that is, when will all things be accomplished that are related to the end of the age.

Observe carefully verses 7 and 13 for Jesus' reference point:

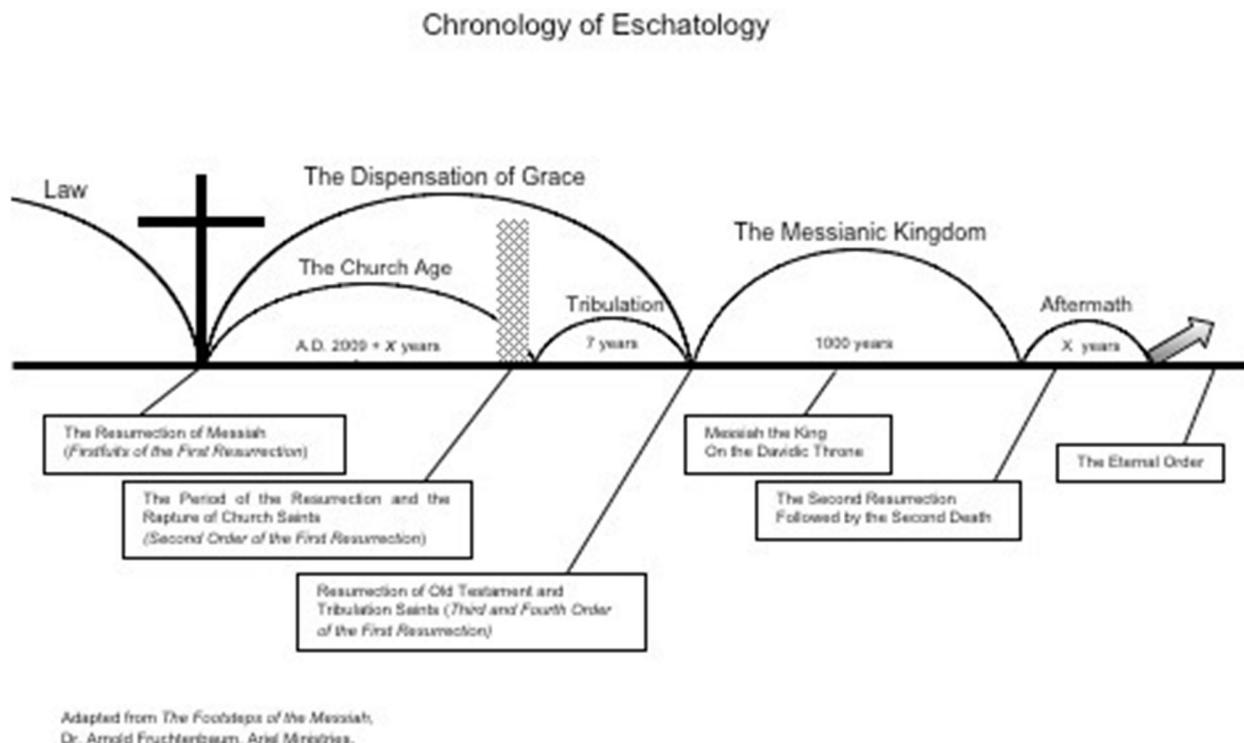
Mark 13:7, 13 (ESV)

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.

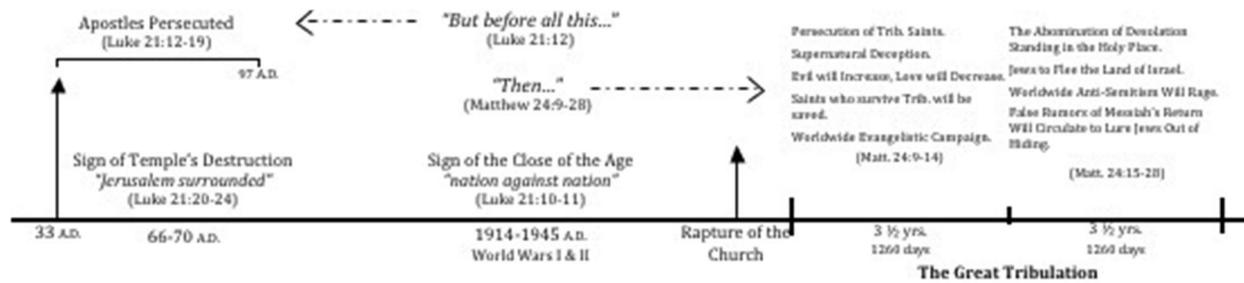
13 And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the **end** will be saved.

In context, these references to the *end* refer to the end of this age, not to the end of the Temple in 70AD.

This age will end with the 7 year period called the *Tribulation*. The age to follow is the Messianic Age.



The second chart visualizes the Olivet Discourse contained in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Mark does not include everything Jesus said on this occasion so there is more in the chart than what we will study this morning.



JESUS FORETOLD SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE (13:5-27)

Jesus' answer focused on the end of this age, not the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. In verses 5-13 Jesus described the general characteristics of the Church Age preceding the time of the end.

General Characteristics of the Church Age (13:5-13)

Throughout the Church Age false messiahs will arise (13:6-5):

Mark 13:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ 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.

False messiahs will not be a sign that the end of the age is near.

Throughout the Church Age there will be regional wars (13:7):

Mark 13:7 (ESV)

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.

Regional wars will not be a sign that the end of the age is near.

Towards the end of the Church Age there will be worldwide conflict, earthquakes and famines (13:8):

Mark 13:8 (ESV)

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.

A worldwide war accompanied by earthquakes and famines will signal that the end of the age is near.

This prophecy was fulfilled by World Wars I & II. The rebirth of the nation of Israel was the result. These world wars accompanied by earthquakes and famines Jesus likened to *birth pains*. Birth pains indicate the birth of the baby is near. So also, these things indicate the end of this age is near.

Throughout the Church Age followers of Jesus will be persecuted, but every nation will hear the gospel (13:9-13):

Mark 13:9-13 (ESV)

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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹² 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.

Notice verse 10 where Jesus says that *the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. Must first be...* before what? Before the end of this age. This is being accomplished in great part by missionaries today. And we discovered in Revelation that the task will be completed by the 144,000 Jewish missionaries who will be sent out during the first half of the Tribulation!

Revelation 7:4, 9-10 (ESV)

⁴ And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

By the middle of the 7 year Tribulation every nation will have heard the gospel. Then, one of the major signs indicating that the end of this age is very near, will occur.

The Abomination of Desolation (13:14-23)

Mark 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ “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.

The phrase, *abomination of desolation* originated in the prophetic section of Daniel 9:27 and described a man who will come in the future and desecrate the Temple.

Some commentators teach that Jesus’ prophecy of the *abomination of desolation* was fulfilled in the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70AD. There are several reasons I believe Jesus was not referring to the destruction of the Temple in 70AD, but was referring to events that will occur in the final 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation.

In this context, *the abomination of desolation* corresponds to the most severe tribulation that will ever be experienced in human history (13:14-19; cf. Dan. 12:1):

Mark 13:14-19 (ESV)

¹⁴ “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. ¹⁹ For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.

This is exactly what is said in Daniel 12:1 regarding the final 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation.

Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

¹ “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

There may be confusion that Mark 13:14-19 is describing the destruction of the Temple in 70AD because it is so similar to Luke 21:20-24. So, keep a finger in Mark 13:14-19 and turn to Luke 21:20-24. Luke 21:20-24 is a prophecy about the Roman invasion of 66-67AD leading up to the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. It gave the sign as to when the Messianic Jews in and around Jerusalem should flee. As we read Luke 21:20-24 note the significant differences between it and Mark 13:14-19.

Luke 21:20–24 (ESV)

²⁰ “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, ²² for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. ²³ Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The sign of the Temple’s imminent destruction in 70AD was the encirclement of Jerusalem in 67AD. That siege was lifted and gave Messianic Jews the opportunity to escape across the Jordan to a city called Pella.

In Mark 13:14-19 the sign that the end of this age is near is the *abomination of desolation*. When the Antichrist sets up his image in the Tribulation Temple, Jews the world over are to flee to the wilderness refuge prepared by God for their protection during the final 1260 days of the Great Tribulation. Jesus reveals that unless God limits the Tribulation of those days to 1260 days, no human being would survive.

In this context, the period of tribulation associated with *the abomination of desolation*, is limited in duration (13:20; cf. Dan. 9:27; 12:7,11; Rev. 12:6,14):

Mark 13:20 (ESV)

²⁰ And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

Daniel 9:27; 12:7, 11; Revelation 12:6, 14; all reveal that the duration of this most severe tribulation will be limited to 1260 days (also described as *times, time and half a time*).

In this context, *the elect* (the Jews) survive the tribulation (13:20-23; cf. Dan. 12:1; Rev. 12:6):

²⁰ And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. ²² For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

Again, this accords with Daniel 12:1 which describes the Great Tribulation:

Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

¹ "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

Revelation 12:6 tells us that the Jews (nation of Israel) will flee into the wilderness where they will be cared for by God for 1260 days:

Revelation 12:6 (ESV)

⁶ and the woman (Israel) fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Jesus warns the Jews at that time not to be lured out of hiding by reports that the Messiah has come.

Mark 13:20-23 (ESV)

²⁰ And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. ²² For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

The Jews will not need to come out of hiding because as Jesus reveals, the event that will bring this age to an end and usher in the Messianic Kingdom will be experienced by everyone the world over!