

THE END PART 2

Mark 13

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This year, Passover will be celebrated April 22-30 with another reenactment of the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb.

What I wanted us to see is that there is a committed movement to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and reestablish the worship prescribed in the Law of Moses. As we study the end-time prophecies revealed by our Lord, we should realize that we are a generation privileged to see that some of these prophecies have already been fulfilled (e.g. worldwide conflict) and that current events are shaping up for the fulfillment of prophecies yet future. The bottom line is that as we study these prophecies we should realize this is not theory or make believe, but the very course of human history. We are living in the time of the *birth pains*. Are we living for things eternal or temporal; are we living ready for Jesus' return at any moment?

In response to a disciple's admiring comment about the Temple, Jesus revealed its destruction such that one stone would not be left on another (13:1-2). History confirms this prophecy was fulfilled by the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70AD.

Returning to Bethany for the evening, Jesus paused on the summit of the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple complex. Peter, James, John and Andrew approached with questions about His prophecy. Their questions were not about the timing and sign of *this thing*, but of *these things* (vv.3-4). This indicates their assumption that the destruction of the Temple would correspond to the end of this age and the inauguration of the Messianic Age.

The destruction of the Temple however, is not the sign of the end of this age.

As Jesus answered their questions about the end of this age, He revealed three things that *will not* indicate the end of this age. These three things will occur throughout the course of this age, but do not signal its end.

- False messiahs will arise throughout this age (13:5-6)
- Regional wars will be fought throughout this age (13:7)
- Persecution of Jesus followers will occur throughout this age (13:9-13)

But three events will occur signaling that the end of the age is near. Jesus likened these three events to *birth pains*.

- A worldwide conflict accompanied by earthquakes and famines will indicate the end of the age is near (13:8).

Jesus' prophecies have proven true. Has not this age - from the time Jesus spoke these prophecies to the present - been characterized by false messiahs, regional wars and persecution of Christians? World Wars I & II and the earthquakes and famines of the 20th century indicate we are in the *birth pains*; the end of the age is near.

THE SIGN OF THE END OF THIS AGE – THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION (13:14)

Beginning in verse 14, Jesus revealed the event which will signal the end of the age is underway in earnest.

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.

Unfortunately, because of similarities with Luke 21:20-24, Mark 13:14-19 has been misunderstood as referring to the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. But careful observation reveals that Luke 21:20-24 refers to the Roman invasions of 66-70AD and provides the sign for Messianic Jews to flee Jerusalem and Judea. That sign was the encirclement of Jerusalem which occurred in 67AD.

But the sign in Mark 13:19 is the *Abomination of Desolation* and it is the sign that the end of this age is very near. Passages such as Daniel 9:27 and Revelation 13 reveal this will occur at the mid point of the Tribulation. Careful observation of verses 14-19 gives clear evidence that the *abomination of desolation* refers not to 70AD, but to the end of this age.

First, the *abomination of desolation* corresponds to the most severe tribulation the world will ever experience.

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.

Second, the *abomination of desolation* and associated tribulation will be limited in duration.

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*). The tribulation of 70AD had no such time limitation.

Third, false christs and false prophets will attempt to lure *the elect* (Jews) out of hiding.

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.

Unlike 70AD, this passage and others in Rev. 12:6,14 reveal that the remnant of the Jews will be protected by God in a wilderness refuge for the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. The enemies of the Jews will attempt to lure them out of hiding with reports that the Messiah has come. Jesus warns the Jews of that day not to be deceived. The coming of the Messiah will be evident to all.

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS AND THE END OF THIS AGE (13:24-27)

Finally, when the tribulation associated with the *abomination of desolation* has run its course, Jesus will return and bring this age to an end.

Mark 13:24-27 (ESV)

²⁴ "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

When Jesus comes at the end of this age to usher in the Messianic Age, all creation will experience it. There will be disruptions in our solar system. All mankind will see Jesus descending in clouds with great power and glory (cf. Acts 1:11). One of the first things Jesus will do is gather together all righteous Jews to Israel. To accomplish this He will gather together all the Jews who survive the Tribulation. His reference to the *ends of the heaven* indicates He will resurrect both Old Testament Jewish saints and Tribulation Jewish saints who were martyred. His focus was on the Jews because He was speaking to a Jewish audience. This does not preclude the fact that Gentile Tribulation saints will also be resurrected at this time. Daniel 12:13 and Revelation 20:4-6 reveal this same resurrection at the end of this age in preparation for the Messianic Age.

Jesus concluded His response with an application for the generation that will experience the end of this age and for all believers living throughout this age.

A WARNING FOR THE LAST GENERATION OF THIS AGE (13:28-31)

Jesus encouraged the end time believers to pay attention to the signs.

Mark 13:28–31 (ESV)

²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Clearly Jesus is speaking to that generation who will see the *abomination of desolation* and the accompanying tribulation. This generation who sees the *abomination of desolation* will not pass away before the second coming of Jesus and the end of this age. Why? Because according to other passages, the interval between the *abomination of desolation* and the second coming of Jesus will be 3 ½ years.

How certain can we be that these things will occur? Jesus affirmed His prophecy with an oath; *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

A WARNING FOR ALL BELIEVERS THROUGHOUT THIS AGE (13:32-37)

Jesus’ final application was to all believers of this age.

Mark 13:32–37 (ESV)

³² “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

The application is clear: Jesus calls all of us to stay awake, to stay alert and be about the work He has given us to do until He either takes us home in death or brings this age to its end (cf. Matthew 25:14-30). In these verses He is not speaking of the Rapture per se. But nothing He says here precludes the Rapture. God has not destined Church Age believers for the wrath that is to be poured out during the seven year Tribulation (1 Thess. 5:9). Soon, Jesus is coming to gather us up to Himself to take us home (1 Thess. 4:13-18). We need always be ready for we don’t know when He is coming for us.

Therefore, let us live everyday spiritually awake, loving God, loving others and making disciples!