

# THE TIME OF THE END

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## Mark 13

### Introduction:

The teaching of Mark 13 takes place on Tuesday of Passion Week. The week began with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey to reveal himself as the promised Messiah – Mark 11:1-11.

Monday – Mark 11:12-19:

- cursing the fig tree
- driving the merchants and money changers out of the temple
- teaching in the temple (assumed from v. 18)

Tuesday – Mark 11:20 into chapter 14

- the lesson about faith from the withered fig tree
- hatred of the Jewish leaders
  - o challenge to his authority
  - o reaction to Jesus' parables
  - o questions regarding paying taxes to Caesar, the resurrection, the greatest commandment
  - o Jesus' teaching and warnings – 12:35-40
  - o Lesson on giving – the widow's offering

Now we come to chapter 13 – still on Tuesday, probably late in the day. Jesus and his disciples are leaving the temple courts on their way back out to Bethany and the Mount of Olives once again. As the disciples admire the structure and beauty of the temple, Jesus makes a bold and terrifying prediction – 13:2.

As they continued on through the Kidron Valley and began the climb up the other side to the Mount of Olives, I am sure that the disciples must have been pondering what Jesus could possibly have meant by what he just said. (This walk probably took at least 45 minutes.) Finally, as they sat down to rest on the Mount of Olives, looking back at the temple they couldn't contain their curiosity. They asked him about when all this would take place – v. 3.

The remainder of this chapter contains Jesus' answer to their questions. We do not have time to look at everything in detail, but I want to focus on some key phrases and concepts that are in this message of our Lord about the time of the end.

### The Message

As we begin there are some things we need to realize as we analyze and try to apply what Jesus is saying in this chapter.

1. Jesus is speaking privately to his disciples. This was not addressed to the multitudes. These were Jewish men, who were understanding this from a Jewish context. Also, all of this was prior to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and before the birth of the church. We can look back at all of this teaching from our 20<sup>th</sup> century understanding and in hindsight we can see all kind of connections to current events, as well as tying it all together with the teachings of the apostolic epistles. But the men who receiving this information did not have any of that. It is intentionally vague, because there was yet much to happen before this would be fulfilled.
2. The teaching of Jesus in this chapter is not one-dimensional. It is really the answer to a complex set of questions. That is even more clearly shown in the parallel passage in Matthew. "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" There are really three questions in there.
  - a. The timing of the destruction of the temple
  - b. The signs of Jesus' coming to establish the kingdom
  - c. The signs of the end of the age

There seems to be, in the minds of the disciples, a belief that the destruction of the temple will coincide with the ushering in of the Messianic kingdom. Jesus' teaching here deals with all of these things but is primarily focused on the signs of his coming and the ushering in of the kingdom, in order to correct the erroneous views of the disciples.

So, with that background in mind, let me see if I can break this down and give a bird's eye view of the content of this discourse. Jesus deals with three key areas, followed by a couple of reminders.

- Signs that the age is coming to an end and the kingdom is about to be established – vv. 5-13
- A time of great tribulation and desolation – vv. 14-23
- The coming of the Son of Man in power and glory – the kingdom – vv. 24-27

This explanation is followed by two reminders:

- The lesson from the fig tree - the importance of being able to read the signs – vv. 28-31
- The fact that the precise time is not known and cannot be known so we need to be alert at all times – vv. 32-37

### Signs of the end of the age – vv. 5-13

- Don't be deceived – there are many things that need to happen before the end comes. Things will get worse before they get better.
- There will be times of persecution, but god will prepare you for all that you will face.
- The gospel will spread to all nations.
- The gospel will cause great division in families and nations – you will be hated, but the key is to endure.

### A Time of Great Tribulation – vv. 14-23

- This is during the 7-year period of tribulation and the wrath of God.
- It is a time of great desolation and will be devastating for any who are living during this time.
- Most of the world's population will perish
- There will be much deception with people looking for someone to deliver them – a Messiah
- Don't be deceived – I have warned you about what is coming

### The Second Coming – power and glory – vv. 24-27

- The time of tribulation will end with great devastation – the sun and moon darkened, and the very heavens shaken.
- Then Christ will appear to establish his kingdom of righteousness.
- He will gather his elect—the tribulation saints—from every corner of the earth
- The final judgment will take place as he sets up his kingdom

This description of the end is followed with two reminders that are even more critical for us than they were for the disciples.

### The lesson of the fig tree – vv. 28-31

- The importance of seeing and understanding the signs
- This generation will not pass away until all these things take place. There are many suggested interpretations of this statement. Let me quote from the ESV Study Bible with what I think is a good explanation.

*[Some] understand "this generation" to mean the generation that sees "all these things" (Matt. 24:33), namely, the generation alive when the final period of great tribulation begins. According to this view, the illustration of the fig tree (Mark 13:28) shows that when the final events begin, Christ will come soon. Just as "these things" in v. 29 refers to events leading up to but not including Christ's return, so in v. 30 "all these things" refers to the same events (that is, the events described in vv. 3–13).*

- Whatever the meaning, v. 31 is very clear – God's Word is eternal and will not fail. Everything in it will be fulfilled.

### No One Knows the Day of Hour

- Only the Father in Heaven knows when the end will come, and Christ will return to establish his kingdom.
- Because we do not know, we need to be alert and ready at all times for his appearing.

### Conclusion

As we consider the significance of this teaching for us, I would like to draw your attention to a very significant statement that is repeated several times. It is the little statement, "Be on guard." You will find this statement three times in these verses.

Verse 9 – Be on your guard... For what? For the difficult times that are coming. Even today, we don't know what may be coming our way—persecution, opposition, being hauled before authorities. But the instruction from Jesus is to endure. Depend on the Holy Spirit for strength

and wisdom when called on to defend yourself. And even when family opposes you, don't give up, for *"...the one who endures to the end will be saved."*

Verse 23 – Be on guard... for what? This is during the great tribulation. Believers from the church age will not be there. But for those who are going through that devastating time, particularly the Jewish people, he is warning them to not be deceived by false messiahs, but to stand on the truth. Don't give in to false teaching and false messiahs. We may not be in the tribulation, but that is good advice even today.

Verse 33 – Be on guard... stay awake. Three times in this section, Jesus warns us to stay awake – vv. 33, 35, 37. We do not know when our Lord will come. The next event on the prophetic calendar is the rapture of the church. We need to always be alert and ready, as it could occur at any moment.

So... with that I close:

- Be on guard – don't give up under the pressure of opposition; be faithful to the end.
- Be on guard – don't give in to false teaching, being deceived by false messiahs and false prophets.
- Be on guard – stay awake. We don't know when our Lord will return, and we want to be ready and waiting when he comes.