

The Temple and the End of the World

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Date: 03 February 2013

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[0 : 00] I want you, if you have your Bibles, to open up to the Gospel of Mark. We are going to be in chapter 13 of Mark this morning. And, in fact, we are going to cover all 37 verses of Mark chapter 13 this morning.

Now, in case that is a bit frightening for you and you think, I know how Chris preaches, we're going to be here for four days if he's going to get through 37 verses. I want to kind of show you the method behind the madness this morning.

We're not going to be here for four days. Because Mark chapter 13 is the kind of passage that you can do one of two things with. You can either take several sermons and break it down bit by bit, so that it would probably take me anywhere from four to six weeks to do it in that way, to go through it in detail and look at every detail of the text.

Or you can do a bit of an overview of the entire passage. And I've decided to do the latter. And there are a couple of reasons for that. The primary reason for that is because we're going to cover all four Gospels in the next several years.

If the Lord wills and Jesus doesn't come back first and I'm still here preaching, we're going to cover all the Gospels in the next 25 or 30 years. So this particular passage is found in two other Gospels.

[1 : 18] It's found in Matthew and it's found in Luke. It's found in its longest form and its most detailed form in the Gospel of Matthew. So eventually, when we walk through Matthew, I will take several weeks to go over the material that's covered in a little bit shorter form in chapter 13 of Mark.

And so that's coming down the road. But what I want to do for us this morning is to help us to get a bird's eye view of the text and try to understand the big picture of what Jesus is talking about here in Mark chapter 13.

So I want you to keep that in mind as we read through all 37 verses this morning. And if you're visiting with us, one of the things that we do as we read the Word is we stand together and honor the Word.

So I'm going to ask you to stand as I begin reading in Mark chapter 13, verse 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.

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. And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?

[2 : 44] Jesus began to say to them, See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, I am he. And they will lead many astray. And when you hear wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed.

This must take place. But the end is not yet. 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. 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.

And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. 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. 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.

[3 : 46] And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 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.

Let the one who is on the housetop not go down nor enter his house to take anything else. And let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And the last for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days.

Pray that it may not happen in winter. 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.

And if the Lord did 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. And then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or look, there he is, do not believe it.

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on your guard. I've told you all things beforehand.

[4 : 57] But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened. And the moon will not give its light. And the stars will be falling from heaven. And the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 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.

From the fig tree learn its lesson. As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that someone is near. So also when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near the very gates.

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But concerning that day, or that hour, no one knows. Not even the angels in heaven, nor the sun, but only the Father. Be on guard.

[5 : 58] Keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 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.

Therefore, stay awake. For you do not know when the master of the house will come. In the evening, or in midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning. Lest he comes suddenly to find you asleep.

And what I say to you, I say to all, stay awake. Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would send your spirit so that he might take these words spoken by your son.

And help us not only to understand them, but to see their significance for us. Help us not only to perceive the truth in them, but to be impacted by them.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys can be seated. The Apostle Peter, in one of his letters, wrote about the letters of the Apostle Paul.

[7 : 10] And he said that some of Paul's writings are difficult to understand. They're difficult, he said. So that we know that there are parts of the Bible that are more difficult to understand than other parts of the Bible.

If the Apostle Peter himself could acknowledge that parts of the Bible are difficult, then you and I should also acknowledge that parts of the Bible are difficult. Now, we should also acknowledge that the basic gospel message of the Bible is not difficult.

It is simple. It's easy enough for almost anyone to understand from reading the Bible. So long as the Spirit illumines their minds. And not only is the basic gospel message of the Bible fairly easy to understand, but most of the Bible is not convoluted.

It's not difficult. It's not a puzzle that God's asking us to put together with great difficulty. Most of the scriptures are understandable to the average reader. That's just the case.

That's why I'm constantly encouraging you to get your Bibles and read them regularly. I'm not asking you to read something that you have no hope of understanding. I'm asking you to read something that I believe that most of the time you will be able to arrive at a good understanding.

[8 : 25] If you read with a prayerful heart, if you read with the Spirit's guidance, if you read with common sense, most of the time you'll understand what the scriptures are saying. But, there are passages that all the common sense reading and all the prayer in the world are not going to remove the difficulties of them.

And I think that Mark chapter 13 and its parallels in Matthew chapter 24 and in Luke chapter 21, I think that this is one of those passages that is very difficult.

It's difficult. Now, I'll tell you what's difficult about it. The primary thing that's difficult about it is deciding whether or not certain parts of Mark chapter 13 refer to events that are still for us in the future or whether parts of Mark chapter 13 refer to events that for us have already happened.

So that there are some interpreters who read Mark chapter 13 and they would say that almost everything that Jesus says in here happened in the past.

More specifically, they would say that almost everything that Jesus prophesied here happened in the year A.D. 70 when the city of Jerusalem was overtaken by the Romans and when the temple itself was destroyed literally stone by stone removed.

[9 : 47] A.D. 70. That happened. And so there are a number of interpreters who would read Mark chapter 13 and say, well, aha, Jesus was predicting for his disciples the events of that particular year and warning them that it was coming and that's what this is about.

But then there are other interpreters who would say, well, that's not the case at all. This is about events that have not yet happened. This is exclusively about events that are tied to the return of Christ and so everything that Jesus says from verse 5 all the way down through verse 37 is in the future and we need to be looking ahead to it.

So which one is it? Did these events happen in the past when Jerusalem fell? Was Jesus predicting something that would happen within the lifetimes of his own disciples? Or was Jesus predicting something that for his disciples at least was in the very distant future?

That's why this is a difficult passage because it's not obvious. It's not clear. And it's not as if you have, well, there are some really strange people over here arguing for this view and all the people that are sane and intelligent are arguing for this view.

So we'll go with the sane and intelligent people and that will decide the issue for us. That's not it at all. For instance, one of my favorite preachers and writers is R.C. Sproul. R.C. Sproul argues that almost all of Mark chapter 13 was fulfilled in A.D. 70.

[11 : 13] On the other hand, another one of my favorite preachers and writers is John MacArthur. And John MacArthur argues that the vast majority of Mark chapter 13 is still in the future. So which is it?

Is it in the past or is it in the future? Well, I think the reason that this particular chapter is so difficult is because some of it's already been fulfilled in the past and some of it awaits fulfillment in the future.

And the difficult thing is untangling which is which. But before we start to do that, let me say a word to you about end times. All right? Because this business about the return of Christ and Judgment Day and end times has in the past been the cause for a lot of division in churches and a lot of arguments among believers.

And I don't think that it should be. In fact, if you go online and you read our Statement of Faith, it's very simple. It deals with end times. And it cites the essential things that we need to believe about the return of Christ.

But it doesn't say anything about the nature of what's called the millennium. It doesn't talk about the rapture and when the rapture will happen or what the rapture even is or anything like that. Because those are not the things that we're taking a stand upon.

[12 : 25] We don't stand for a particular view of end times at church at the cross. What we say in our Statement of Faith is that there are three essential things that you must believe about end times in order to be considered orthodox or biblical.

And those things are that Christ is going sometime in the future. He's going to physically, visibly return to the earth. That's going to happen. The scriptures are very clear about that. Secondly, not only is he going to physically, visibly return to the earth, but when he does that, he's going to judge the world.

Everyone will face the judgment on that day. Not only that, but thirdly, when Christ returns, he's not only going to judge the world, but he's going to raise the dead.

Jesus says both the righteous and the unrighteous will be raised up on that day. So if you believe in the physical, visible return of Christ, if you believe in a future judgment, and you believe in a future resurrection of the dead, then you believe all the things that I think you need to believe to consider yourself to be sort of within the boundaries of what we can call Christian.

All of the other issues surrounding end times, like the millennium, like the rapture, like the nature of the timing of the tribulation, all those sorts of things, all those can be debated.

[13 : 40] They can be kind of an in-house sort of debate that we can have, and then we don't have to walk away mad, and we don't have to divide, and we don't have to split over those sorts of things. It's not necessary. They're not that high up on the scale of important doctrines.

They're important because we see the scriptures speak of these things, and we need to know and understand what the scriptures say, but we're not going to divide over those things. So all that being said, as we approach this passage, you might agree with everything I say this morning, and you might disagree with like 80% of what I say.

That's okay, because we need to be united around those basic teachings about end times, and I want you to keep that in your mind. I want you to know those basic things that I'm affirming before we move ahead and we guide them.

So let's move into the text, and let's see. Remember, one of the primary questions that we're trying to answer in Unraveling This Not is, which parts of this passage already have been fulfilled and already happened in AD 70 when the temple was destroyed by Titus, and which parts are still in the future.

So let's begin by reading. First of all, one of the things that you need to recognize is the context of what's happening here. We're told in verse 13 that Jesus and his disciples came out of the temple.

[14 : 52] Now if you remember, he has been teaching in the temple, teaching and confronting the religious leaders of Israel in the temple, and that sort of confrontation has been growing and growing.

A couple of days earlier, he entered the temple on a separate occasion, and he ran out the money changers, he overturned the tables, and he created a stir in part of the temple, in one corner of the temple, and by doing that, he was signaling to his disciples, and he taught them through the acted out parable of the withered fig tree.

He was teaching them that the days of the temple system were numbered. That the days in which God spoke to his people through this whole sacrificial system were over.

That in fact, because the temple and its priests had failed to recognize the Messiah, and had failed to function in a way that pleased God, not only were the days of the temple numbered, but a curse from God was actually coming upon the temple, and the entire temple system, and the religious leaders.

This has been an increasingly difficult confrontation between Jesus and the temple leaders. And in that context, Jesus and his disciples leave the temple, and we're told that one of his disciples says to him, Teacher, look, what wonderful stones, and what wonderful buildings.

[16 : 19] So as they walk out of the temple, the disciples are saying, Jesus, look at this structure. It is amazing. And it was amazing. It was not only amazing to the Jews, it was amazing to others who came on pilgrimages to Jerusalem from other parts of the empire.

The temple in Jerusalem was a major, massive, ornate, and beautiful structure. And everyone agreed that it was.

So as they leave, the disciples say, Teacher, look at these beautiful, wonderful, all-inspiring buildings that we've just walked out of.

To which Jesus replies, You see these buildings? There's not going to be one stone left here upon another that will not be thrown down.

Not one of the stones that you see before you, disciples, not one of them that we have just walked upon. None of the walls that surrounded us as I was teaching the crowds. Not one of those will be left standing on top of another.

[17 : 24] This is all coming down. It's going to happen. Which causes his disciples to begin to wonder and ask questions. So they leave the city.

And as you know, just outside the city is the Mount of Olives. And they go out and they sit on the mountainside of the Mount of Olives from which they would have had a perfect, picturesque view of the temple.

In verse 3 we're told that as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when will these things be?

And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? Jesus, you say the temple is going to be destroyed. When? When is this going to happen?

But that's not the only thing they ask. They're not merely asking about the destruction of the temple because in their minds, the destruction of the temple is automatically tied to the establishment of God's kingdom, the judgment of the world.

[18 : 28] All of that is tied together in their minds. These disciples cannot conceive of the destruction of a building so magnificent, a building so religiously significant to them without meaning that the end of the world has come.

They can't separate those things in their mind. They're tied together in their minds. In fact, I want you to hold your place in Mark and turn over to Matthew chapter 24 where Matthew gives a little bit more detailed account of the question that they ask Jesus so that you can see what they're getting at.

In Matthew chapter 24, verse 3, same thing we just read in Mark. As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately saying, so here's their question in a little bit more detail.

Tell us, when will these things be? Things you just talked about, the destruction of the temple. When will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?

So you see there? In Mark, when they say, what will be the sign when all these things take place? What Mark is simply doing, he's just simply summarizing their question.

[19 : 41] And their full question was, what's going to be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? Because the destruction of the temple, Jesus' coming, final coming, and the end of the age are all tied together in their minds.

They're not separate events for them. It's all wrapped up together. So they're saying to Jesus, you just said the temple is going to be destroyed, so when's that going to happen? And all the other stuff. When are you going to come in power and glory?

When are you going to end this? When is all of that happening? It's all tied together. Jesus is going to make some disconnections between these things. Jesus is going to disconnect the destruction of the temple that they've just left from His second coming.

But they're not totally separate events. There are connections between them, but they're just not tied together in the ways that these disciples believe. So, follow on what Jesus says.

In answer to their question, He says to them, in verse 5, See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in My name. Saying, I am He, and they will lead many astray.

[20 : 51] And then He goes on to describe a world in which there are wars and earthquakes and famines and all sorts of things. He tells them in verse 9 that they need to be on guard because persecution is coming for them.

So, in answer to their question, Jesus says first of all, Okay, I'll talk to you about these things, but the first thing I need to say to you is do not be led astray. Do not let the discussion of these sorts of things lead you astray.

Because they're already making assumptions that aren't true. They're already assuming that when the temple falls apart, when it's destroyed, that that's the time when Jesus is going to return.

They're already making assumptions that's not true. So, Jesus is going to begin by saying, Don't be led astray. There are a lot of things that are going to happen. All right? There are going to be wars.

Kingdoms are going to fight against kingdoms and that's going to happen. There are going to be earthquakes in various places around the world. There are going to be famines around the world. These sorts of things are going to happen.

[21 : 55] It's going to happen. And then he says at the end of verse 13, But the one who endures to the end will be saved. The one who endures through all of those things, that's the one who will be saved.

Not the one who's led astray. Not the one who throws away their faith when persecution comes. The one who endures through wars, earthquakes, famines, persecution, all of those things.

The one who endures through those and remains faithful to Christ and keeps believing and keeps trusting in Him, this one will be saved. So here's what I think as I look at the opening to Jesus' answer.

I think that verses 5 through verse 13 describe not simply the events that would happen in the disciples' own lifetime, nor does it describe simply the events that would happen right before Jesus comes back.

I think verses 5 through 13 describe the entire church age. So these describe the experiences of all Christians everywhere at all times.

[23 : 03] Has there been a century? Has there been a generation that has not experienced these things? Look around the world today. We see wars taking place all around us.

There are places in the world where there are famines. Believers are being persecuted all over the world. It's been in the news this week about the missionary, the pastor in Iran who has been sentenced to the prison in Iran simply because what?

Because he began small little house churches and he preached the gospel several years ago. Persecution is alive and well today. There has not been a generation in which these things didn't happen.

There has not been a generation in which there were not wars and famines and earthquakes and persecution. These things are generally true for the entire church age for every believer of every generation.

It doesn't mean that each of us individually experiences war or famine or being drugged before kings and governors. We don't each individually experience that.

[24 : 03] But there are people in every generation in every century that are believers who endure those sorts of things. So these verses, verses 5-13, I think, describe the entire church age.

But then Jesus turns his attention to something else. To answer to the very specific question of when are the things that you, when are these stones coming down, Jesus? When is this happening?

So I think that verses 14 all the way down through verse 23 are about destruction of the temple which happened in A.D. 7.

Let's read a couple of things that Jesus says here about this destruction of the temple. He says in verse 14, but, or now. So he's given a broad description of things that will happen throughout the church age.

And then he says, he's going to detail a specific event. But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be.

[25 : 07] And that's a weird phrase. But he's going to help us out. Mark says, adds this little phrase in parentheses. Mark is adding, let the reader understand. In other words, let the one who reads the word understand what Jesus means by the abomination of desolation.

What does he mean by that? Well, Jesus is referring back to a phrase that's found in the book of Daniel. And in the book of Daniel, in chapter 11 of Daniel, the abomination of desolation, or Daniel says, the abomination that causes or brings about desolation, referred to a particular event that occurred in the 2nd century B.C.

about 160 years or so before Jesus was born. About 160 years before Jesus was born, a ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes invaded Jerusalem and invaded the temple in Jerusalem.

And he took over the area and he killed a lot of people. But one of the things that he did as he sort of took over the temple there in Jerusalem is that he set up idols and he sacrificed animals to these idols.

Some accounts even say that he sacrificed pigs in the temple to these false gods. There could be nothing worse really in the eyes of the Jews than to have an idol paraded into the temple, particularly into the Holy of Holies where Antiochus Epiphanes brought these things.

[26 : 29] So Daniel is predicting, Daniel is writing centuries before those events took place, and Daniel predicts a time when this particular ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, would do these awful things to the temple.

Jesus is using the same language that Daniel used to describe a terrible event in the temple to refer to a similar terrible event that will occur in the temple.

Follow me? So Jesus says, when you see something like what happened with Antiochus Epiphanes, when you see something similar to that happening, you need to know something. Then let those who are in Judea, he says, in the end of verse 14, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Let the one who's on the housetop not go down, nor anger his house, nor take anything else out, and let the one who's in the field not turn back to take his cloak. Jesus is saying that when you see this happen, get out of the city.

Bad things are coming when this happens. When he says, don't go down off the rooftop, most of the rooftops in Palestine in those days were flat rooftops.

[27 : 40] And they were used as a kind of porch, particularly in the evening when it would cool off. That's where they would spend a lot of their time. And Jesus is saying, when this happens, do not take the time to climb off your roof and gather things out of your house.

Leave immediately. If you have to, run from rooftop to rooftop, but get out of the city. He says, if you're out in the field and you're working, you don't run back to get some of your stuff out of your house.

Leave now. This is bad. When this happens, your priority is to get away from it. You cannot survive it if you stay here.

You cannot. Jesus is describing a cataclysmic event that will happen in Jerusalem that will happen and mirror what happened when Antiochus Epiphanes set up an idol in the temple.

That's what he is describing. Now remember, he's answering the question, Jesus, when are these stones going to fall?

[28 : 44] So Jesus is not speaking about some far off distant temple in the future that hasn't been built yet. If you say that all of this is in the future, well, there's no temple in Jerusalem right now.

There's not a temple. So what you have to say is that, well, if this is going to happen in the future, there's going to be another temple built in the future. And so you have a lot of people who watch Jerusalem very carefully and want to know when the temple is going to be built so they can know when these things are going to happen.

But what you've got to remember is Jesus is answering the question, when are these stones? I just said, this building is coming down and he's telling them when this building is coming down. This building came down in AD 70.

That's the question that he's answering in these verses. And if you think to yourself, but my goodness, the things that he is describing in these verses, in verses 14 through 23, how could they possibly describe anything other than the end of time?

How could anything this terrible happen? Well, it happened. Let me, in fact, I want to read to you a couple of quotes, just a few quotes, from a Jewish historian named Josephus who lived during this time period.

[29 : 59] In fact, he was there, not in the city, outside the city with the Roman armies. In fact, Titus sent Josephus to the gates of the city several times to plead with the people in Jerusalem to surrender.

The Roman armies surrounded the city in AD 66. For four years, the city of Jerusalem was surrounded by these armies. For four years, these armies starved the citizens of Jerusalem out until finally they invaded and destroyed it utterly and completely in 70 AD.

Josephus is standing outside. He's witnessing things. He's hearing the reports of soldiers. And this is his account of the destruction of Jerusalem. Just a few quotes. Listen to this. He talks about the hunger.

In the city. He says, Throughout the city, people were dying of hunger in large numbers and enduring unspeakable sufferings. In every house, the merest hint of food sparked violence and close relatives fell to blows, snatching from one another the pitiful supports of life.

He says, No respect was paid even to the dying. The ruffians searched them in case they were concealing food somewhere in their clothes or just pretending to be near death. Gaping with hunger like mad dogs, lawless gangs went staggering and reeling through the streets, battering upon the doors like drunkards and so bewildered that they broke into the same house two or three times in an hour.

[31 : 26] Need drove the starving to gnaw at anything. Refuse, which even animals would reject, was collected and turned into food. In the end, they were eating belts and shoes and the leather stripped off their shields.

Tufts of withered grass were devoured and sold in little bundles before drachmas. So the picture in Jerusalem is of utter helplessness, famine, starvation has set in after these days.

Now he's going to describe when the Romans come marching through. He said, But when they, the Romans, ran everyone through whom they met with and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies and made the whole city run down with blood to such a degree indeed that the fire of some of the houses was quenched with these men's blood.

So much blood in the streets of the city that the fires cannot spread from house to house. And then he says a couple of words of summary about the destruction of Jerusalem.

He says, It appears to me that the misfortunes of all men from the beginning of the world if they be compared to these of the Jews are not so considerable as they.

[32 : 40] And he says, Neither did any other city suffer such miseries nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was from the beginning of the world.

Eyewitness account. He was there. And Josephus, who was there at the destruction of a number of cities as an official Roman historian, he was there. He was not inexperienced in these things.

Josephus says, This was the absolute worst thing that has ever been done to any city in the history of the world. Four years they were stark out. The city was burned to the ground.

The bodies were stacked in the streets. Tens of thousands of Jews died in those four years. And at the end of it all in AD 70 as the Romans finally proclaimed their victory, they marched into the temple with their standards which had the eagle at the top of a large staff and descriptions of deity to Caesar himself.

Idols were brought into the Holy of Holies and set up to show that they had conquered. And once they had done that the soldiers began to see the amount of gold that was inlaid in the temple and in order to get the gold out they set the temple on fire and pushed every stone off of another in order to get the gold.

[34 : 04] Literally the historians tell us not one stone of the temple was left upon another in AD 70. The things that Jesus spoke about in these verses came to pass with incredible accuracy.

So let me just summarize what I've said so far. Verses 5 through 13 are about the whole church age and the kind of suffering that all believers will have to face at one time or another.

Verses 14 through 23 are about the destruction of the temple in AD 7. Moving on. Verse 24 tells us But in those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken and then they will see the son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory 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.

These verses 24 through 27 I think are Jesus beginning to answer the question of when are you coming back and when is the end of the age?

So he's answered one question when are these stones going to fall now he's beginning to answer another question when are you coming? When is the end of the age?

[35 : 30] And what he tells us is that it's going to be after the tribulation that he's been describing the tribulation that will take place throughout church history the tribulation that very early on in the history of the church reaches kind of a high point in the destruction of Jerusalem that's a part of that broader tribulation and he's saying now after those days after all those things take place after you're paraded before kings after wars after earthquakes so after the tribulation that is common to the church age throughout all centuries after that happens the sun will become dark the moon won't give its light the stars will appear to be falling down and then they'll see the son of man coming in the clouds that son of man coming in the clouds is a reference to the passage that you read earlier that speaks of the son of man coming before the ancient of days where God the Father gives to God the Son all authority over all the nations and Jesus is borrowing that language the son of man coming on the clouds now to answer their the second part of their question when is your coming and when is the end of the age well that's going to happen after this period of tribulation that's going to happen and then all these great signs will occur and the son of man will come riding in on the clouds remember in the book of Acts when Jesus ascended into heaven and left the earth and the angel looked at the disciples and said to the disciples why do you stand here staring into the sky he will come back in the same way that he went in other words Jesus left going up into the heavens on a cloud he will come back the son of man riding in the clouds to receive from the Father the kingdom that will encompass all nations that's what Jesus is describing here in these particular verses so it lays out with whole church age particular event that's going to occur early on in the church age and now what's going to happen after the end of the church age now verses 28 through 31 he gives a parable to try to explain some of the things that he's been saying he says now from the fig tree learn its lessons as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves you know that summer is near so also when you see these things taking place you know that he is near at the very gates truly I say to you this generation will not pass away until all these things take place heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away this is probably the trickiest part of this whole passage because Jesus speaks about the end being near he speaks about him being at the very gates and yet he says that this generation will not pass away until all these things take place so there's some questions that we need to ask first question that we need to ask is what is the generation what is it well consistently as we read through the gospels anywhere you find the phrase this generation he refers to the people who lived at the time when Jesus was speaking so there have been a lot of attempts to try to say well this generation refers to the Jewish race or this generation refers to the people living at the time when Christ returns but if we just look at the gospels the normal use of this phrase this generation would lead us to believe that it refers to the people who were living when Jesus said that second thing that we need to ask is what are these things verse 29 when you see these things take place you know that he is near what are these things what is it what is he what is he talking about well the other reference to these things

is up in verse 23 Jesus says verse 23 but beyond your guard I have told you all things beforehand see it these things down there all things in verse 23 so to figure out what these things refers to down in verse 29 we didn't know what all things refers to in verse 23 and I think all things in verse 23 refers to everything from verse 5 all the way down to verse 22 so it refers to the sufferings common throughout the church age and it refers to the destruction of the temple Jesus says when these things happen know that the end is near so when did these things happen well they did happen in the first century because the disciples of Jesus they did experience all those kinds of sufferings and the temple was destroyed within one generation a generation is roughly 40 years in biblical measurement and these things happen right about 40 years after Jesus said them so within a generation the temple fell within a generation the disciples had endured all of these things but here's what we need to remember if these things if I'm right and these things refers to all the verses 5 through 22 then these things refers to things that are still going on now kingdoms are still warring against one another famines are still happening earthquakes are still happening so these things of which the destruction of Jerusalem is only part these things are still happening so Jesus instructions to his disciples are listen when you see these things take place you need to understand the end is near and I don't think that what he means is the end is going to come for sure right then

I think that what he means is his disciples be ready when you see all of these things happen you're going to experience them yourselves the temple will be destroyed toward the end of your lifetimes and when these happen you need to understand that I can come back at any moment at any moment and that's as true for us as it was for them take a look and read what happens next in the passage Jesus moves on in verse 32 to address very specifically once again his second coming and this is what he says but concerning that day or that hour no one knows not even the angels in heaven nor the son but only the father so the point that Jesus is making is when these things when you see these things happen disciples understand I could come back at any moment it's from your perspective it is near from our perspective 2000 years later it is near but we do not know none of us knows when it's going to happen

Christ may come back before we get out these doors this morning he may not come back for another thousand years but we need to live and think as if he might return at any moment that's the point that he's making all these things have happened which means he can return at any time at least for a few years the disciples could have been sure that he's not coming back yet because the temple still stood but now we live in an age where all these things have happened and he can come back at any time and we don't know when it's going to happen so in light of all that in light of what's happened in the past and in light of what's going to happen in the future how do we live now and what do we do with all the things that Jesus is saying here I want to give you some suggestions I want to look at some of the commands that Jesus gives us in here but before I even do that I want to offer to you what I think is one good use of this particular passage or at least part of it and that is to say that there are those who would argue that this book is not of divine origin there are those who would say that this book is no different than any other ancient book or even modern book that's been written it's just the opinions of men you know the same people who say that said that

Daniel didn't write Daniel you know why they say that Daniel didn't write Daniel not because it's not written in the right language it's written in the right language to be written at the time of Daniel not because it doesn't have all the characteristics of a book that would have been written when Daniel lived some people say that Daniel didn't write Daniel because Daniel predicted with incredible accuracy events that would happen centuries after he lived some people say that Daniel didn't write Daniel because they don't believe that God is capable of revealing the future to his prophets you know there's some people who say that Jesus didn't say these words there's some scholars who say that Jesus could not possibly have said this because it is far too accurate a description of events which he could not have known but if Jesus is a prophet and the son of God we have all the reason in the world to believe that these words were spoken by one who knew the future and who knew what was coming 40 years from the day that he spoke these words with incredible accuracy you want to show people the divine qualities of the word take them here to

[45 : 07] Mark chapter 13 show them the accuracy of Jesus predictions read them the things that Josephus had to say compare them and show them look Jesus whom I worship was a great prophet Jesus whom I worship was the divine son of God who saw and knew the future with an accuracy that cannot be explained in any other way this chapter has great use for defending the faith but I want to offer up some other uses of this passage I want to start off with one of the first things that Jesus says to his disciples in response to their questions it says in verse 5 see to it that no one leads you astray do not be led astray Jesus says because there will be false prophets there will be people who come and proclaim things in my name that are not true there will be people who come and proclaim to be me or to speak in my behalf who do not have the right to make those kinds of proclamations do not be led astray by them it is amazing to me that the vast majority of cults that exist in the world a cult being a group that takes portions of the Bible and twists them and then adds things from something else to come up with a theology that is far field of what we find revealed in the scriptures that the vast majority of cults in existence today and even throughout history have had at their core some kind of radical departure from what the Bible says about end times so you have groups who will say well Jesus has already returned in some sort of quasi spiritual form so he's not coming back physically or you have people who say there's no judgment there's no lake of fire there's no hell to which unbelievers will be thrown it's a distortion of what the

Bible has to say about end times and so this warning for us as we look at a passage that deals with the end times is very appropriate for us do not be led astray by false teachers test everything you hear by this book and by nothing else do not be led astray Jesus says he gives another command just a few verses later that we need to see verse nine he says be on your guard why because they're going to deliver you over to councils because they're going to persecute you persecution is real anyone who embraces a theology that says that if you just believe enough you don't have to endure pain you don't have to suffer through hunger or poverty or heartache if you believe enough has not read carefully what Jesus says to his disciples Jesus says these things are coming for you you will suffer as a follower of you will not only suffer like everyone else in the world you will suffer uniquely and distinctly because you follow me these things will happen be on your guard be ready for it don't be one of those people who is shocked that hardship would come into their lives don't want to be one of those people who say

God what are you doing every time difficulty comes into your life don't be one of those people who cannot believe that God would have in store for them sufferings in order to accomplish his goals in their life understand what Jesus says be on your guard be ready for it it is coming only the one who endures to the!

will be! thirdly there's a last command last warning that he gives us it's at the very end of the passage he says it a couple of times he repeats the command be on guard but it has a new meaning in verse 33 be on guard and he modifies it he says keep awake verse 35 therefore stay awake and then verse 37 stay awake what does he mean!

by that! he means be ready at all times for him to come back in glory and in judgment upon the world do not fall asleep in your diligent duty to Christ do not fail to do the things that he has called you to do because he might come back when you're in the middle of sleeping or if you're busy doing kingdom work he might come back while you're!

[49 : 41] busy at work about the he finds you doing when he returns do not be lazy do not fall asleep do not neglect the things that he has charged you with doing so do not fail to share the gospel with people that he has put in your life specifically so that you might share the gospel with him do not fail to answer the call to do the ministries that he's called you to do whether that's feeding the hungry whether that's working for a pro-life organization or whether that's doing something specifically in the context of the church whatever ministry God has called you to do for the sake of the glory of Jesus do not fail to do it do not fall asleep or you ought to be on the job because he might come back not right this second but he might come back this afternoon or he might come back when he expects you to be doing something for his name don't be led astray be on guard and stay awake because regardless of whether you agree with my interpretation of the things about end times and the temple and all that stuff these things are true and these things are commands for us let's pray