

## Jason Upchurch - Mark 13:11-9-13 - The Good News that the Temple Will Be Destroyed - Part 4

Alright, we are moving along in our study of the Olivet Discourse. By now most of you know that my contention here is that Jesus is foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century: 70AD. This is not talking about the future from our perspective but it is talking about the future from their perspective in 33AD.

A lot of good brothers think this is maybe talking about both the first century and the second coming or the rapture. These are good brothers, but I believe that this is just focused on the first century. I think the context and the plain language supports that.

Why does this matter? Why spend so much time on this? Because what you believe about theology will affect every area of your life. Theology is not confined to just thoughts in you head. Theology eventually plays itself out in your life some way.

What you believe about the Lord's Supper, baptism, Trinity, male headship, modesty, children - all these things eventually work themselves out into how we live life. The Olivet Discourse is no different.

Part of the reason for taking our time through this section is that a wrong understanding of this section will make for really weird views on everything else. Iran launched an attack on Israel yesterday - I think most of you saw that. And the first thing I saw as people were talking about it was a quote from **Matt 24** about "wars and rumors of wars." You'll begin to see this plastered all over social media and conservative radio and media as some sort of indication that the return of Jesus is near. There's some sort of doomsday implication that we need to be looking for WW3.

It may be near, it may be a long ways off. But bad Bible interpretation leads to some really weird views and really weird conclusions that can eventually have some very awful end results. Part of the reason I want to go slow - not too slow - but slow is because I think part of my job teaching you the Bible is to ensure you don't get caught up in end times sensationalism that is often connected to this passage.

I don't want you guys doing newspaper exegesis where you're holding a newspaper in one hand, your Bible in the other and trying to decipher the Bible with the Spokesman Review or, heaven forbid, the New York Times. That's not how the biblical authors want us to understand the text. They want us to understand it from their vantage point, understanding their words, in their context.

If you want a book on this RC Sproul's book "The Last Days According to Jesus" is a great start. Also, simply reading the relevant sections of Josephus is good as well.

So, this is our basic outline.

**Vss. 1-2:** Pronouncement of Destruction

**Vss. 3-4:** Questions of timing and signs

**Vss. 5-8:** Non-signs: Events that don't indicate anything

**Vss. 9-13:** Warning of Increasing Persecution (also not a sign)

**Vss. 14-23:** The One Sign to Look for

**Vss. 24-27:** Confirmation that Jesus is the Son of Man

**Vss. 28-31:** Parable 1: Fig tree - The Sign is Crucial

**Vss. 32-36:** Parable 2: Watchman - Watch for the Sign

We are half way through the fourth section which where Jesus tells his disciples about what the church can expect in the years between his ascension and second coming.

We saw the first 3 last time: Persecution from Jewish authorities, and persecution from Gentile authorities. We also saw that despite that persecution the gospel would spread to all nations, meaning the Roman world at the time. Not every nation on the globe - but the Gentile Roman world. And the NT clearly indicates in many ways that the gospel had spread to the nations in that sense by 55AD or so.

Jesus is not talking about about the gospel spreading to every geographic entity on the planet before his second coming, he's promising the gospel would spread to the whole Roman world before Jerusalem was destroyed. And it was spread.

These are not signs of the impending destruction of Jerusalem. These are just the normal course of history for the first century church. That's why I've called them non-signs. The actual sign is in the next section. So we are now at the 4th thing the church can expect:

4) The fourth thing Christians could expect during this time is to give Testimony at trials. **Read 11**

The disciples could expect to give testimony at trials in the first century. And this is somewhat related to **Vs. 9** where they will be delivered over to councils and kings. But here the issue is the testimony that they will give.

Jesus says don't worry about the testimony you will give before these kings because specifically the promise that Jesus gives here is that the Holy Spirit will speak through these disciples when they give an account.

This is a very specific promise of the testimony of the Holy Spirit through these men during that first century in this very specific way that doesn't necessarily apply to us.

There are a lot of Christian legal events happening in our world and our time now. There was the Supreme Court trial over the football coach in Seattle who was sued for praying with his team. He kneeled on the field for every game and invited others to do so as well and was sued because somehow people thought that since he was paid by the public school that was government establishing religion.

There's the cake maker Jack Phillips in Colorado who has been to the Supreme Court. Baronelle Stutzman in Richland who owned Arlene's Flowers who was sued.

John MacArthur's church was instrumental in opening thousands of churches in California and throughout the country and world by fighting the legal battle against the state of California during Covid. But in each of those there was proper trial procedure and evidentiary gathering. They had to wait to get their day in court.

I was able to go to a legal event here in Spokane a couple weeks ago where the speaker was a Christian who grew up in Spokane, was the CEO of Alliance for Defending Freedom and had argued 2 cases before the US Supreme Court. In both cases there was preparation due to the long legal process.

So there is the reality that Christians are still giving testimony to this day. But that's not what Jesus is talking about.

What Jesus tells the disciples is that they don't need to prepare. Why not prepare? Why wouldn't they want to make a strong case? Well, they will make a strong case because it's the Holy Spirit speaking through them. But I think it's because their trials will be so fast and the sentence so deadly that they won't have time to mount a proper defense.

**Turn to Acts 4:5-12.** This is Peter giving testimony before the council for healing the crippled man. **Read**

Specifically **Vs. 8** says that they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

You think of the stoning Stephen - it was all over in a matter of minutes. **Look at Acts 7:51-60.** I just want to show you this one instance because it's really the clearest example of a disciple giving testimony for Jesus and it's clear he is being guided by the Holy Spirit. **Read**

This is at the end of his sermon and it seems clear here that he is being specifically guided by the Spirit to give this testimony. There's no time for him to prepare. There's no evidence gathering that can happen. It's a mob coming after him.

The apostle Paul when he preached the gospel on Cyprus says specifically he was "filled with the Holy Spirit" as he began to rebuke the magician and preach to Sergio's Paulus. **Acts 13:4-12**

So it seems like this was a special grace given to the early church in order to bear testimony of the gospel in the first century.

Here's why I say that: look back at **Mark 13**. Notice the promise here. **Read 11**

The Holy Spirit speaks, not the person. In Luke's version Jesus says "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to contradict." He will specifically guide their speech.

What Jesus seems to be promising is a very special work of the Holy Spirit to speak through people in the first century. Now think about that: if you are a Christian you are filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the definition of a Christian: someone who has become the Temple of the living God through faith in Jesus. And of course the Holy Spirit guides us and leads us and sanctifies us. But this is more than that. This is divinely guided speech that we cannot claim is coming from us. ***It is not you who speak.***

If you came to me and said "Jason, it's not me who is speaking right now, it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking and I've got a message" I would be rather nervous about what would follow. Unless you were quoting some passage of Scripture you memorized.

This is truly prophetic speech from the Spirit himself speaking to authorities. And that's what we saw in Acts. The situations the early Christians were put in were almost sudden ad hoc trials where they didn't have time to prepare a formal defense or gather legal counsel and prepare for months.

The early church was often put to the sword so fast there was no opportunity to make a calculated defense. So Jesus says don't worry about that. You don't need to be anxious, I'll send my Spirit to speak through you.

What about us? Does this apply to us now? I think there is certainly a generic sense in which the Spirit guides our speech, it is to be seasoned with grace and we are to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs filled with the Word of God, filled with wisdom as we speak. But I don't think we can say "I'm not the one who is speaking, it's the Holy Spirit who is speaking through me" like these guys could.

Now, I also think we don't need to be anxious when we face persecution or trials. Again, we don't have this specific promise to us, but we are not to be anxious for anything, we are to pray for those who persecute us, and glorify God in our life or death no matter what comes.

But in light of all the hardships coming on the disciples in those coming years, this is actually a supernatural promise from Jesus to aid them as they preach the gospel.

5) The 5th thing Christians could anticipate in the first century. Family Persecution and Hatred. **Read 12-13**

What is about to come upon the disciples is internal persecution like they've never experienced. At this point in the ministry the vitriol has really just been aimed at Jesus from the religious leaders. It's been very specific.

Except for being associated with Jesus, the disciples themselves haven't actually felt much of the brunt of the persecution.

But Jesus says that what they can expect in the intervening years is rift at the most intimate levels: within the family. And the rift would be about Jesus himself.

Jesus said the night before he died - just 2 days after this - in **John 14:18**: If the world hates you know that it hated me first. He's warning them about the onslaught of hatred about to come upon them.

But it would be specific to families as well. **Turn to Matthew 10:32-42.**

This is earlier in Jesus's ministry and he is again preparing the disciples for what they will face in the coming years and it's almost the same language. **Read 32-38**

This is what is on the line for Jesus. For both us and his immediate disciples the question is where is our loyalty? Are we going to confess Jesus? Or are we going to deny him? Who do we love more? That will come at a cost.

Now, up until this point we don't see a lot of this conflict with the disciples. I'm sure there was some at that time. You think of some of these disciples just dropping the family business and wandering off after some itinerant preacher - that would probably ruffle some feathers. You can imagine Peter's wife wondering when Peter is going to come home from all the preaching tours.

But we haven't seen hatred to the point of family killing one another over Jesus. This seems to have really took off after the resurrection and ascension. This is where the division really became prominent.

I think most of us have felt some friction within our families in one way or another over our commitment to the Lord. Some disown us, speak evil of us, and maybe even act hostile toward us. Around the world following Jesus can be the cause of being disowned or shunned and sometimes even handed over to authorities.

But what Jesus is saying is that the normal thing to expect leading up to the destruction of the Temple is the severest form of persecution. **Turn back to Mark 13:12 Read**

Jesus is anticipating the most severe form of persecution from the most intimate of relationships. Kids killing their dads. Dads killing their kids. Siblings putting each other to death over Jesus. This was radical.

Now, on the one hand, when we are called to follow Jesus we are called to follow him no matter what. Jesus is very black and white: we either love him the most, or we don't love him at all. This is the first commandment: you shall have no other gods before me. Nothing comes before Jesus, if it does then it is an idol.

And just like these first century Jesus demands our complete loyalty and devotion.

6) Thing the first century Christians could expect: Hatred by all people. **Read 13**

Remember these are all signs of nothing. Nothing about any of what Jesus is describing meant that Jerusalem and the Temple were about to be destroyed. This was the normal course of events. If we were to read through the book of Acts, Christians were hated by a wide variety of people: Jews, Gentiles, Samaritans, islanders, mainlanders, the average person, kings...everyone.

And widespread acceptance of the gospel would not be the norm for Christians. The gospel would spread, but it would spread very slowly. They would be hated by not just family, but by all people.

And history and tradition bears this out:

Peter: Tradition was crucified upside down in Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero.

Andrew (Peter's brother): Tradition suggests he was crucified on an X-shaped cross in Greece.

Philip: Tradition holds that he was martyred in Hierapolis, by hanging or crucifixion.

Bartholomew (also known as Nathanael): Traditionally, he was flayed alive and then either crucified or beheaded.

Thomas (also known as Didymus): Tradition suggests he was martyred by spearing in India.

Matthew (Levi): Tradition holds that he was martyred by either stabbing or beheading in Ethiopia.

James, son of Alphaeus (James the Less): Little is known about his death, and there are various traditions, including martyrdom in Egypt.

Thaddaeus (also known as Judas, son of James, or Lebbaeus): Traditionally, he was martyred by arrows in Persia.

Simon the Zealot: Traditionally, he was either crucified or hacked to death in Persia.

Again, this is church tradition and it's hard to know, but it seems that most met their end at the hand of these governors and kings for their testimony of Jesus.

The apostle John may not have been killed, but he was exiled at the hands of the governing authorities.

This was to be expected. To some extent we can expect it too. People hate us because they hate who? Jesus. Nothing new there.

7) The seventh thing the church could expect was need for endurance. **Read 13**

This intervening time would be hard. It would not be easy. Matthew adds that many would fall away in this time and even those who claimed to be Christians would betray one another.

The love of many would grow cold because of this difficult time.

Now, for most Christians we have a relatively easy life. Around the world there is extreme persecution, of course. But for the most part Christians have it fairly easy especially here in America. Even the greatest persecution we've seen in our history during the shutdowns was easy, relatively-speaking.

Now I want to spend a few minutes answering a question that some of you have about this section. I've been making the case that this is referring specifically to the first century, the time leading up to the destruction of the Temple. And the question that some of you have is: okay, I can see that it's talking about the first century, but couldn't it be talking about final days before Jesus returns as well? Couldn't this be a double fulfillment situation?

If you have an ESV Study Bible that's one of the options the editors give for understanding this passage.

My answer to that is still no. Again, I'm okay if you disagree with that. But here's why:

1. The whole context is the first century destruction of the Temple they're looking at in the first century. If we try to make it the whole wide world at the end of time many of these things make no sense. They only make sense in a first century context.

2. There's no indication here that Jesus is describing what we would call end time events. Nowhere here does Jesus explicitly or even implicitly mention that he's now talking about his second coming. People who say this is talking about both events often have a hard time knowing when Jesus is talking about which event because even they admit he doesn't make it clear. I think that lack distinction is actually an argument that there is no distinction.

He will return, that's our blessed hope and we look to his coming. He will come back to the Mount of Olives just like he ascended from the Mount of Olives. But there's no indication here at all that that is what he's talking about.

3. It doesn't seem to be a double fulfillment. Sometimes when you look at passages in the Bible that have a double fulfillment there seems to be indications that it can't possibly be talking about just one event.

So when David writes **Psalms 16** we see a lot of content that could easily refer to him. But in that psalm he also says that the Lord won't abandon his soul to Sheol or let his holy one see decay. But David's bones turned to dust. So it can't be completely referring to David. And this is actually the argument the apostles made for the resurrection of Jesus after 3 days in Acts 2. "David couldn't be talking about himself in that psalm because his body is just over there."

Another double fulfillment passage is in **2 Sam. 7** when the Lord gives the Davidic covenant promising to set one of David's descendants on the throne. Now, there's a sense in which Solomon fulfills that roll. But there's also a sense in which he can't fill that roll because God promises a Kingdom that will last forever - and Solomon's Kingdom is gone. Who's Kingdom is lasting forever? Jesus's.

There's other examples but when we're talking about passages with double fulfillment there's usually a portion that conflicts just enough that it can't be just one fulfillment.

Here, all of the conditions we've seen so far were fulfilled in the first century. Persecution of Jewish leaders, gentile leaders. The gospel was preached to the whole Roman world, the Holy Spirit spoke for them, they were put to death by family and friends, so on. There's nothing in this section - and I don't believe in any section - that requires a double fulfillment.

4. Someone will then, say, "Well, even though it's not explicit, couldn't we say these things might happen right before Jesus returns." Which is just a really weird way to interpret the Bible: to take random biblical events and then say those will happen right before Jesus returns without the Bible saying it. The Lord killed 185,000 soldiers of Assyria in one night, that's cool - but not too many people would say "that's going to happen right before Jesus comes back."

On top of that, remember the things we've looked at so far Jesus has said explicitly are not signs of anything. They're just things that will be the normal course of events: they will happen, but they're not signs that the Temple is about to be destroyed.

Jesus says in **Matt 24:6**: see that you're not alarmed, for this must take place but the end is not yet.

These wars and rumors of wars, nothing to be concerned about. This is just the beginning.

**Luke 21:9**: Don't be terrified...the end will not be at once.

That's why I call them non-signs because these aren't anything remarkable, Jesus says. They're not signs that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed.

So if they're not signs of anything in the first century, it's hard to understand how they're signs of something in the last century.

Maybe someone could argue they're also not signs of anything in the last century. Which, I guess I could agree with, but then I'm not really sure why they would matter.

So it's really hard to make something that Jesus explicitly says doesn't point to anything back then, now all of a sudden point to something now or in the future.

These are just the normal course of events Christians could expect. And some of them continue on to this day. We have wars and rumors of wars now. So according to Jesus that's not a sign of anything.

We have famines and persecutions now. Also not signs of anything. We speak before kings and magistrates. Not a sign of anything.

And here's how we know there is a transition. **Read 14-16**

Do you notice the drastic change? The abomination that causes desolation is when the Roman armies surround Jerusalem - Luke makes that clear.

I don't know what's going to happen in the next week in Israel. Or the next year or ten years or 1,000 years. The Dome on the Rock could be destroyed and all Israel's enemies eliminated. Temple rebuilt, sacrifices happening. Or nothing could happen.

You know what we're looking for? Jesus to come in glory.

When Jesus comes - and he will come and it will be amazing and glorious - he will come just as he left. In glory with the angels in power. It won't be preceded with signs. It'll be preceded with a trumpet blast and all his saints saying Maranatha:

Come, Lord Jesus!

**Pray**