

Jason Upchurch - Mark 13:9-10 - The Good News that the Temple Will Be Destroyed - Part 3

Well this is part 3 of our tour through the Olivet Discourse and I'll tell you I have been encouraged by the feedback I've received from you guys. And specifically the feedback I'm encouraged by is that you're studying the Bible more. Some of you agree with my understanding of this passage, some of you aren't sure, some are not convinced at all. But it seems that the theme that I'm hearing with most of you is that it's causing you to look at your Bibles more closely as you think through this section.

And I just have to say that that warms my heart. That's what the Berean's did in the book of Acts and they were called noble for doing so. So this is good.

As we come to this section, I want to remind you that this is not some random or arbitrary section. This is an entire chapter that is crucial to Jesus's ministry and I titled these sermons "The Good News that the Temple Will Be Destroyed." That sounds odd that this is good news, but it is. Remember back in **Mark 1:1** we talked about how Mark views all of the life and teachings of Jesus to be the good news. The good news is not just the central truth of substitutionary atonement of Jesus dying on the cross and rising again. It's all of the life and ministry and person of Jesus.

So this section is good news. It's good news because:

- God judges sin & sinful leaders - the religious leaders were wicked.
- Jesus is a true prophet - what he prophesied actually came to pass. This is not a small thing. Three whole chapters of our Bible are dedicated to this one prophecy. More than predestination/baptism/communion/head coverings/hell/heaven/spiritual gifts.
- Christians are the true temple of God: there is no more physical temple because we are the temple of God.
- The shadow of the sacrificial system has faded and the reality in Jesus is here.

But people often use this section for their sensational end times scenarios. For some reason my news feed has had some articles about a red heifer in Israel and how that is somehow supposed to be a sign of the end times because Israel will now build a 3rd Temple. None of that has anything to do with the Bible but people like to talk about it.

But let me say that even if they did do it, it will be just as much of an abomination if they do it in the future as it was when they did it in the past because Jesus is our temple/priest/sacrifice/lamb/covenant. The Temple sacrifices have passed away forever as a means of pleasing God.

So all that to say that this section is not some wild offshoot. This section is Jesus declaring that the Temple will be destroyed. The New Covenant will do away with the Old and the reign of Messiah will begin.

And interestingly, do you remember the false charges that people tried to make about Jesus to condemn him? "He said he would destroy the Temple and raise it in 3 days." That was the false charge. He actually said **they** would destroy the Temple, referring to himself, and that he would raise it.

But here he does promise to destroy the Temple. This is the first time he makes the claim that he will destroy the Temple. They will kill him - the True Temple - and so he will kill them, the Temple of Satan.

Okay, let's go. Remember my contention is that this whole chapter refers to the Temple's destruction in 70AD. It has absolutely nothing to do with the second coming of Jesus in any way. Some people think it does, that's okay. We can all be friends. But I think he is completely focused on the Temple being destroyed in the first century.

This is my 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've seen the first 3 sections. Jerusalem will be leveled, the disciples ask for the sign and when and Jesus begins by telling them some things that are not signs. Non-signs. Earthquakes and famines and wars and rumors of wars are not signs of anything. Don't be alarmed at those. Those all have to happen and they all did in the first century.

This morning we're looking at more things that are not signs of the destruction of the Temple. What's the difference between **Vss. 5-8** and **Vss. 9-13**? The difference is that the first paragraph are big events that occur throughout the Roman world whereas the second paragraph is what believers specifically can anticipate. How were Christians received and treated? And what the early church could anticipate from the ascension of Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem was persecution. And Jesus explains that there will be persecution in a lot of ways.

Okay, so what was the church to expect in the years between Jesus's ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem. There are 7 or 8 things that Jesus mentions. And I'm somewhat tempted to just read the whole book of Acts because the book of Acts records basically all of this. But unfortunately we don't have time for that. And we're only going to get to the first 3 today.

1) The first thing the church can expect in the time from the ascension to the destruction of the Temple is Persecution from Jewish Authorities. **Read 9**

So this verse actually talks about persecution from 2 factions: Jewish Authorities and Gentile Authorities which we'll look at in a little bit (point 2).

This would be common place in the first century. Jesus and the disciples have already endured Jewish persecution in their ministry. We've seen that throughout Passion Week - every possible sect of Jewish leaders have come against Jesus and the disciples and this will continue to be the case from now until the destruction of Jerusalem. Once Jerusalem was destroyed, the "religious leaders" would then be just local synagogues. There was no Jewish ruling authority after 70AD of much consequence to the church because the Temple was absolutely leveled to the ground. There were no more priests, no more Temple, no more Jewish influence on Roman governance. That was kind of the point of the destruction of the city.

By the way, that word "councils" in **Vs. 9** is literally the word Sanhedrins. You will be delivered over to Sanhedrins and synagogues. This is very Jewish centric. And after 70AD there was no more Sanhedrin, although synagogues certainly exist to this day.

But this is characteristic of the first century. So, put a bookmark here and **Turn to Acts 4**. The apostles are preaching about Jesus after healing a lame beggar. And they are arrested. **Read 4:1-4**

You know the rest of the story, they are warned not to teach anymore about Jesus. They, of course, ignore that warning. **Turn to Acts 5:14-21**. **Read**

You know the rest of the story here as well. They are beaten and let go and they continue to preach. This is all before Jewish authorities. **Turn to Acts 6:8-15**. **Read**

So Stephen is seized by these people of the synagogue and that word for council in **Vs, 15** is literally Sanhedrin. So it's not even the official Sanhedrin, it's just a council of Jewish leaders. And, of course, Stephen dies at their hands. He was delivered over to a synagogue and council.

Acts 9:23-25: Paul preaches in Damascus and has to escape the Jews by being lowered through the wall in a basket.

Acts 13:44-47: Paul and Barnabas preach at a synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia and get thrown out by the Jews and turn to the Gentiles.

Acts 14:1-7: They're at a synagogue in Iconium and the Jews set a trap to beat and kill Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 14:19: The Jews follow Paul to Lystra and stone him and drag him out of the city for dead.

If you've read the book of Acts recently you know how this goes. The missionary team goes to a city their first stop is the synagogue and it seems about half the time they get ran out of the city by the Jews. The unbelieving Jews become major antagonists to the gospel.

Titus 1:10,14 Paul warns that there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers, deceivers - especially those of the circumcision party. Jews. Later he warns people to not be carried away by Jewish myths. It was a constant danger.

Turn to Acts 23:1-11. This is unique because it is a turning point in the book. It's a comical scene where Paul plays the religious leaders off each other. **Read**

And again the word in **Vs. 1** is Sanhedrin. He stood before all of these. And so did many Christians in the first century. Especially those who were of Jewish decent. Giving up their pagan, Christless Jewish religion to follow Jesus often cost them everything.

And as I pointed out last time, this was something unique to the first century. It's not something we fear at all today. The warning Jesus gives in **Mark 13** is not a warning for the generation that lives when Jesus comes back in glory. It's a first century warning. We're not in any danger of synagogues and Sanhedrins. We're not delivered over to them. So it would make no sense for this to refer to the second coming.

Don't turn back to Mark, but if you remember the second non-sign is: You will stand before governors and kings for my sake and bear witness to them.

2) Stand before Gentile kings and governors. That's the second non-sign of Jesus's return. Christians wouldn't just stand before Jewish leaders, they would stand before Gentile leaders. This is the course of the first century - nothing unusual when it happened. It was not a sign of anything. And we see it happen as early as **Acts 12** when Herod kills the apostle James and arrested Peter. **Turn** there really quick. **Read 12:1-7**

Of course Peter escapes the death sentence. Both James and Peter were caught up in the Roman political system very early on.

Acts 13:4-12 Paul stood before Sergius Paulus, remember that was the guy on the island who had that magician named Bar-Jesus whom Paul blinded? Paul was giving an account and the guy came to faith.

Acts 16:35-40. This is when Paul was in Philippi and cast the demon out of the slave girl. And they arrested Paul and put him in prison. There was the earthquake and Paul didn't run. And he kept the jailer alive. Well, it turns out he was illegally beaten which was illegal to do to a Roman citizen. So Paul demands the magistrates come and release him, which they do.

He does it again in Corinth in **Acts 18.**

Acts 23: He stood before Felix the governor.

Acts 25: He stood before Agrippa and Bernice

Acts ends with him waiting for a trial before Caesar in Rome. We don't know what happened to him. Some believe he was beheaded. Others think he was released and killed later. We don't know. But we do know he stood before Caesar.

What you have to understand is that in the first century Christianity was a radical religion. And it was hard for unbelievers to understand the difference between Christianity and Judaism. Christianity was often viewed as a

sect of Judaism. Same Bible, same tenets in a lot of ways. A lot of people understand the differences now, 2,000 years later. But in the first century it was very unusual. And it became illegal in Rome to be a Christian because it wasn't an authorized religion. Christianity was technically illegal until Constantine. So a lot of this standing before governors is giving a gospel account about Jesus to those who have never heard or had heard just a little.

The apostles and many Christians were handed over to governors and kings for the sake of Jesus. What Jesus is preparing them for is that that is to be expected in the years leading up to the Temple's destruction.

And again, I want to emphasize that Jesus says standing before governors and kings was a sign of exactly nothing. It had no significance as a sign for when Jerusalem might be destroyed. Jerusalem would be destroyed within a generation, but no one knew the day or hour. Let's **turn back to Mark 13**.

3) The 3rd way Christians could expect to be treated throughout the first century that was not a sign of the destruction of the Temple was that The gospel will be preached to all nations. **Read 9-10**

This horse will be hamburger by the time I'm done here, but I just want to be clear: this is talking about the first century and is a sign of nothing. Jesus says the gospel will be preached to all nations in the first century **before** the Temple is destroyed.

"Jason, this cannot be talking about 70AD because the gospel has not been proclaimed to all nations even now! There are nations around the world where the gospel hasn't even been preached. There are people who have not heard. So this has to be talking about the second coming - wake up, man!"

Now, the context of the passage is the destruction of the Temple they are staring at, Jesus says in **Vs. 30** all this will happen to this generation, all the warnings are to those disciples and the geographic cues are all in Israel. But I admit this is a hard one.

So I'm just going to tip my hand and tell you what I believe and see if I can defend it from the Bible. I think when Jesus says the gospel will be preached to all the nations, he does not mean all around the globe. What he means when he says "all nations" is the Roman world. And the whole Roman world had heard the gospel by 70AD and the Bible writers clearly believe that and use that very language.

Here in Mark, the word "nations" is ethnos - the nations, or the gentiles. The gospel will be preached to all ethnos. The idea is that the gospel will permeate the Gentile world. Not just the Jews, but also the Gentiles as well. There will be broad preaching of the gospel to the Roman world.

Now, I know that doesn't solve the tension for us. So let's look over at **Matt. 24:9-14** for a minute. Same basic gist, here. **Read 9-14**

Matthew gives us a little more detail. The gospel will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come. I think the end he has in mind is the end of the Temple - again that is the context. Not the second coming.

But Jesus says that the whole world and the nations are basically the same thing. So Mark gave us the Cliff's Notes: the nations. Matthew says proclaimed throughout the whole world to the ethnos - Gentiles.

Now, stay with me, I'm not trying to do tricks here. But again, we need to ask: what is that world? The whole world? The word for world in Greek is oikoumene. It does occasionally mean humanity or all of humanity, but usually it just means the Roman world. The inhabited world that people in Jesus's day would recognize as the Roman Empire. How do I know this?

I'm just to quote some passages for you to help you understand this does not mean the whole globe as we know it.

Luke 2:1: In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world - oikoumene - should be registered

Now, the whole planet was not registered. China, Africa, India, tribal lands in modern day Russia - not registered. But it says the whole world. What world? The Roman world. ESV Study Bible: "means all the known, inhabited world that was subject to the civilization and governance of Rome."

Acts 11:28: Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius).

This was not a global famine. You know what area it hit? It hit Rome hard.

Acts 19:27 The Ephesians blacksmiths didn't want the gospel preached because, "the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom Asia and the world worship."

The Chinese didn't worship Artemis. Neither did the Africans. She was part of the Greco-Roman pantheon. And if the "world" means the whole globe, why say Asia? Because Asia and the Roman world were different geographic entities in the mind of Romans.

Okay, that's just some of the uses. You can look up more if you're interested. My point is that just the phrase "all the world" often means just the Roman world." Not always, but often. How does that connect to the gospel? Well, the gospel has gone into the whole world.

Turn Acts 17:2-7. This is Paul in Thessalonica preaching the gospel at a synagogue and the Jews get mad. **Read**

The charge against Paul is that the thing he's telling people is upsetting the whole world - oikoumene. They have turned the Roman world upside down and even unbelieving Jews recognize the spread of the gospel.

Turn to Acts 24:2-8. This is Paul on trial before Felix. He's on the coast at Caesarea in protective custody because the Jews tried to murder him. And here's the charge against him. **Read**

So whether he's in Thessalonica or in Israel it's clear that even Paul's opponents know the gospel is spreading to the whole world: oikoumene. The Roman world.

Turn to Rom. 1:8 for a moment. **Read**

The faith of the Romans - the gospel faith - is proclaimed in all the world. That's actually a different word for world. Here it's "kosmos" which is a rough equivalent to oikoumene. But the point stands that the saving faith of the Roman believers is known in all the world.

Turn to Rom 10:14-18. This is Paul talking about how someone needs to hear the gospel in order to be saved. They have to hear the message of Jesus Christ and him crucified. And the gospel has gone out to the whole world. **Read 14-18**

So the Word of Christ - the gospel - has indeed gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the earth. And it's an interesting verse he uses. He actually quotes from **Psalms 19** talking about general revelation. How the sun, moon and stars give evidence for God to the ends of the world so that everyone has a testimony about God.

Well, Paul's point is actually that the gospel has spread that much too. To all the earth, to the ends of the world.

But that doesn't include China or South America or South Africa. No. Because that's not what would be in the mind of someone hearing "all the world" back then. They understood it to be the Roman world. And the gospel had gone to the all Roman world.

And after those 2 passages, he says in **Romans 15:24, 28** Paul is hoping to go to Spain. The gospel has gone to all the world, the ends of the earth...but Spain still needs to hear it.

Look at Col. 1:3-7a, 21-23. Now, while you're turning I just want make sure you understand that just because you see the word "world" it doesn't mean only the Roman Empire. Context matters. Sometimes it means all humanity. Sometimes it means Gentiles, sometimes it means unbelieving world. Context determines the meaning. **Read 3-7a, 21-23**

Paul says the gospel has been proclaimed to all creation - every creature under heaven. Does he mean every single last person in the whole planet? No. But has the gospel permeated the Gentile Roman world? Yes.

What's my point? My point is that when Jesus says the gospel must first be proclaimed in all nations **back in Mark 13:10** that he is not thinking at all about his second coming. He's not thinking about every geographic entity that exists 2,000 years after his resurrection. He's not thinking about Mexico and Philippines and Nicaragua and Mozambique.

He has in mind the Roman world. This was common usage and Paul clearly wrote that the gospel had been preached to all the Roman world and even unbelieving Jews knew the gospel had been preached to the entire Roman world. And they all used those exact words that Jesus used to describe it: *ethnos, kosmos, ktisis - all creation, all the world, all the people.* And what they all mean by that is the Roman world.

For Jesus and the NT writers and even unbelieving people at the time, the Roman world was the world. And the gospel was preached to all the world before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD.

Now, I just want to address one issue that I think needs it at this point. If all the world heard the gospel in 70AD does that mean we don't have to preach the gospel? Now, I think you know my answer and the Bible's answer but let me just be clear: we are commanded to preach the gospel.

We are commanded to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light. **1 Pet 2:9**

We are commanded to go make disciples of all nations. **Matt 28:19-20**

We are commanded to train our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. **Eph. 6:4** which includes telling them the gospel.

We are to spread the fragrance of Jesus to everyone: the aroma of Christ to those who are being saved, although we are the aroma of death to those who are perishing **2 Cor. 2:14-15**

Our desire is that all nations would know Jesus. And, you guys, that increasingly means that our nation needs to know Jesus. As the culture follows hard after Satan we need to call them to follow hard after Jesus.

So even though this passage is talking about the gospel being preached to the Roman world - and that happened - we too want to see all the nations come to faith in Jesus.

Pray