

Mark Study
Week Nineteen
Mark 13:9-14:5

Day One

9 "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. 11 Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

v. 9 – Keep in mind that Jesus is answering the question the disciple asked: When will the destruction of Jerusalem take place? Jesus warned that His followers would be persecuted, not by the Romans, but by their own countrymen! That was more painful and difficult to handle because those were people they knew, with whom they grew up and with whom they had the closest bonds. The same will be true for you.

Perhaps this is why Jesus warned them to be on their guard. Many would be tempted to fall away or turn back because their Jewish leaders or family would oppose them. In fact, the letter to the Hebrews is a letter to believing Jews who considered abandoning Jesus and returning to Judaism. When you read Hebrews, there is one word that stands out and that word is “better.” The writer (or writers) were arguing that believing Jews had a better covenant and superior way of life than Jews without Jesus. Yet the persecution and misinterpretations of what would happen to them as believers caused them to doubt the Way they had chosen.

Are you in doubt of your Way? Have things happened to you that you thought would never happen, and have those things caused you to doubt your decision to follow Jesus? Are those closest to you persecuting you because of Jesus? If so, you may want to read Hebrews and receive the encouragement and lessons that are presented there for just such a situation.

v. 10 – This verse has caused some to lose the focus of this passage and consequently to apply Jesus’ answer to His Second Coming. Jesus said that the gospel would be preached to all nations before these things would take place.

By 70 AD when the Temple was destroyed, the gospel had indeed spread to all nations in the proximity of Jerusalem, although probably not to every ethnic group in that region. We don’t have time to discuss this, but it is probable that Jesus was referring to the nations that His listeners would have known that existed and not to, say, the native Americans. Just those nations around them would have “stretched” their faith and imagination to the fullest extent.

v. 11 – Jesus promised that *when* they were arrested (not if), they should not worry about a response to their accusers’ questions. The Holy Spirit would be with them and equip

them to answer with great wisdom and insight. For an example of this, you can read Acts 7 and see the response that the first martyr, Stephen, gave to his accusers. He preached an anointed message, but it enraged his listeners and cost Stephen his life. But the Holy Spirit did inspire His speech to the leaders!

Day Two

12 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 13 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14 "When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong, let the reader understand; then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15 Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out.

v. 12 – What a tumultuous time that was to be! Families would be divided against one another, all because of Jesus. This would have been especially painful and difficult for those involved, especially a Jew. They were taught to honor and obey their parents, but their relationship with the Lord had to take priority over their family. That was true then and is true now.

Is there any family relationship that is causing you trouble in regard to your walk with the Lord? If so, you must put that relationship in proper perspective and serve the Lord first and foremost. Don't use your family as an excuse and don't hide behind your family to keep from doing what God wants you to do.

v. 13 – This is another example of apocalyptic language – graphic and exaggerated to make a point. The point was that the persecution would be intense; whether *every* man would hate the believers isn't important. It would *seem* like everyone would be against them, so they were to be on their guard not to be overwhelmed. This would be like someone saying, "That won't happen in a million years." They aren't talking about a literal million years; they would be saying that there is no way the thing they were addressing would ever happen and they exaggerate to make the point. No one would accuse that person of lying.

v. 14 – What is the abomination of desolation? Probably Jesus was referring to the Roman army with their banners and standards that would eventually surround Jerusalem. Josephus, the Jewish historian, reported that no Christians lost their lives in the siege of 70 AD. Because they took Jesus' answer literally and applied it properly, they fled Jerusalem, not listening to any who said the fall of the city would not happen.

v. 15 – Jesus urged His followers not to waste any time when they saw the armies around Jerusalem. They were to flee, and they did. Jesus urged them to escape with their lives and the clothes on their back. History tells us that they did just that.

I wonder, however, why this prophecy and prediction is included here. I think it is so we would understand the significance of the sack of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This wasn't simply

a military issue. It was a spiritual problem. The Jews had rejected God, so God tore down their religious infrastructure.

We learn from this that God rules in history. What happens is by His decree and foreknowledge. You can relax and rest in His care, for He is in control. That same reality holds today, so you can once again rest in God's care. Please don't be caught up in the hysteria and misinformation concerning the Second Coming. There is no reason to be fearful of that, for God is in control and can take care of His people no matter what happens.

Day Three

16 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. 17 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 18 Pray that this will not take place in winter, 19 because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now and never to be equaled again. 20 If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. 21 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. 22 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect, if that were possible. 23 So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

vs. 16&17 – Jesus stressed urgency when the sign of the end of Jerusalem was near. The gift was to be that they would escape with their lives, while many others would die or be enslaved. Jesus predicted that it would be dreadful for pregnant and nursing mothers during the siege of Jerusalem. Women and children always seem to suffer most when there is a war.

vs. 18&19 – Notice that Jesus stated, “*when* God created the world.” Was Jesus accommodating the ignorance of His audience, as some would say, or did He speak the truth? Of course, He spoke the truth! God created the world! And Jesus would know because He is God. There was no big bang, no chance collection of gases and circumstances. The world is the product of an Intelligent Being who created it with thought and purpose.

I am currently reading the historian Josephus' account of the fall of Jerusalem that Jesus predicted. It paints a nasty picture of what transpired when the Romans besieged and sacked Jerusalem. Josephus' account only corroborates what Jesus had predicted would happen. Jesus could do nothing but speak the truth, whether about the past, present or future.

v. 20 – I reiterate that Jesus' knowledge of what would happen indicates that He is sovereign over history. He spoke with absolute knowledge and authority and did not attribute what He knew to “the word of the Lord” as other prophets had done. Instead He spoke as the word of the Lord because He was the Lord. This is another indication and proof that Jesus is God.

Notice the terminology here. Jesus said that for the sake of the elect God “has shortened” the time of this siege. Even though it was not to happen for 30 years, God had shortened the days. Jesus spoke of the future as if it were already done, like it was past history and not future prediction. God speaks about those things that will be as though they already are.

v. 21 – **Do you know why there are counterfeit twenty-dollar bills in circulation? Perhaps another question will reveal the answer: Why aren't there any counterfeit three-dollar bills?** Because there aren't any real three-dollar bills, that's why. There are counterfeit twenties because there are real twenty-dollar bills.

So following this logic, **why would false Christs and Messiahs appear?** Because there was a real Messiah. There would be no sense in a false Messiah appearing before the real one, just like there is no possibility of counterfeit money appearing that would replicate a future money that no one has ever seen. That would be ludicrous. So the fact that others would come and claim to be the Christ indicates that the Christ had most probably been on the scene. This is just another proof of the legitimacy of Christ.

vs. 22&23 – Ah, the counterfeits would appear to deceive the elect, who acknowledged the existence of the real Messiah. I am American and am familiar with my nation's money, but a counterfeit note can still fool me. I have read that the best way to identify a counterfeit is to be thoroughly familiar with the real. So the best way not to be spiritually deceived is to be well-acquainted with the real. **So how well do you know Jesus? Are you growing in the knowledge of who He is?** I hope so and I further hope that these studies are contributing toward that end.

Day Four

24 "But in those days, following that distress," 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' 26 "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

vs. 24&25 – Notice that Jesus now seemed to change the topic to describe what will happen in the days following the fall of Jerusalem. Is that the case or was this a continuation of His narrative on the Roman conquest of the Jews? Here Jesus quoted biblical apocalyptic language (exaggerated images and language) also found in Isaiah 13:10 to make a point. **Was He referring to His ultimate return?**

In this case, I think not. Based on the context, He was saying that His people would be gathered again after they were scattered by this traumatic event. **Was He perhaps referring to the preeminence of the Church as the entity where God's people would gather as opposed to the holy city of Jerusalem?**

v. 26 – This seems like Jesus was referring to His return in the clouds, but something doesn't make sense for it to mean that. This is a sudden transition to that topic of His ultimate return. Nothing has been said about the Second Coming up to this point, so we have no idea whether or not Jesus had even talked to His disciples about that event at that point in their relationship. And the disciples did not ask about His return, so why would Jesus link His return to His other information about the destruction of Jerusalem?

All that leads me to conclude that this is a continuation of Jesus' warning about the fall coming 70 AD.

vs. 26&27 – I know, this seems like it would refer to the Second Coming. Please be clear: I believe in the Second Coming. It will happen! I just don't believe that is what Jesus is talking about in these verses. I believe that Jesus did "appear" in power and glory when His prediction came true in 70 AD. I further believe that He did send His angels to gather His people in His body, where there was no competition with a holy city or a Jewish religious system that portrayed itself as the option for God's affections. Jerusalem's day ended in 70 AD and the Church's day began in earnest as the place for God's people to dwell.

Does this make sense to you? Feel free to disagree with me, for many would disagree with that position. I am open to changing my position if anyone can make a cogent argument for another interpretation. And that is an important attitude to have, for we must all be flexible and open in our positions as we grown and mature in our understanding of Scripture.

Day Five

28 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. 30 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. 32 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

vs. 28&29 – Jesus used a familiar analogy (for his audience) to finish His lesson. When they saw the fig tree with tender twigs and leaves, they knew summer was near. Therefore, when the disciples beheld the things that Jesus had just described, they were to know that the time for the end of the city was near. From all indications, they did indeed take Jesus seriously and did escape harm, while the city and its inhabitants who refused to leave did not.

v. 30 – We can debate the definition of a generation and whether or not those things happened during the span of a generation. That would be missing the point. The point is that Jesus was saying that the things He described weren't for centuries later. They were for the then and there.

v. 31 – Was Jesus saying that heaven and earth would pass away? No. He was saying that heaven and earth would disappear before what He had just said would not come true. **Do you get the idea that Jesus wanted them to take His words and warnings seriously?** He wanted His people to know that the end of the Judaic system of worship was not long for the earth.

vs. 32&33 – Jesus also made that statement about His second coming in Acts

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8).

While I am tempted to say that Jesus is now talking about His return, I don't see anything in this passage that lets me know that a subject transition has been made. Jesus was in essence saying, "If you want more specific information, I can't give it to you. Just take my word that this will happen and act when the time is right."

Day Six

34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. 35 "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

v. 34 – Jesus was like the man going away and leaving His house in the care of His servants. He then assigns tasks and has warned the disciples to keep watch. **Why would Mark spend so much time writing about an event that was going to relate only to the current generation? Plus, if Mark was written as late as 70 AD, this event had already taken place. So why would He choose to write in such a thorough manner concerning the fall of Jerusalem?** Here are some things to consider:

1. The reader would understand that the event was not just a result of Roman power but of God's purpose.
2. The significance of the Church in God's plan and the de-emphasis of the Temple and Jerusalem in the economy of God.
3. The event established the supremacy of Jesus as God's Son and the Messiah.
4. The reader would know that the fall of Jerusalem was in part due to the Jews' disobedience.
5. The reader would know that Jesus had predicted the event, which would establish not only His prophetic office, but also His divine insight into the future.
6. If this was written before the fall of Jerusalem, then it would serve as a warning to the reader.

Can you think of any other reasons why Mark would write so extensively about this event?

v. 35 – Once again, it is tempting to assume that Jesus was referring to His ultimate return. I don't see the context allowing this interpretation, so we will continue to see this as a continuation of Jesus' answer to the disciples' question about the fall of the Temple.

Jesus was reminding the disciples that He did not know when this would happen, He only knew it would. **Is this a sign that Jesus' omniscience was limited due to His humanity? Or was this truly only something the Father knew and did not share with the other persons of the Trinity?** I think I am in deep water theologically. That discussion is also beyond the scope of this study, so we will defer this discussion to another time and place.

If you have a simple view on this that you can share with my readers, feel free to write it.

v. 36 – Jesus urged everyone to “watch!” He urged His followers to take His warning and prediction seriously and to watch the signs for the inevitability of it all happening. Their survival depended on their watching, so Jesus commanded them to be alert.

Day Seven

1 Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. 2 "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot." 3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. 4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

v. 1 – Jesus was being watched and in imminent danger, yet He courageously and obediently chose to stay in that situation. I admire Jesus' courage and commitment to the will of the Father. Contrast Jesus to the cowardly leaders, who connived and searched for some “sly” way to arrest and kill Him. They proved that they were of darkness because they operated in the dark. Jesus functioned publicly while they worked behind the scenes. That provides a stark contrast to standard operating procedure for the kingdom of God and that of Satan.

v. 2 – Since there were many people in Jerusalem for the Passover and Feast of the Unleavened Bread, the leaders did not think it wise to do what they were plotting during the Feast. Yet God's purposes prevailed, for Jesus had to be sacrificed at the time of Passover as God's sacrificial Lamb who would take away the sins of the world. The leaders did not and could not comprehend how they were being used for God's purposes.

You may not realize it either, but God is using you right now and is preparing you to fulfill your purpose. I think of what was written about Samson concerning this very thing:

(His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel) (Judges 14:4-5).

Don't even mistakenly think that God isn't working His purposes through you. He is.

v. 3 – Simon the leper was undoubtedly someone whom Jesus healed and Jesus was then in Simon's home for dinner. A woman came into the dinner party, carrying a jar of expensive perfume. Just reading this account makes me uncomfortable. I would not want anyone pouring perfume over my head without first asking my permission. Then I would not be interested in reeking of that perfume for the rest of the dinner. What if it was a fragrance I didn't like? Then there were the other guests – what would they think of what was happening? The woman didn't even seem to seek permission from Simon the host.

There are times when others do something to you, in the will of God, and all you can do is humbly submit to the process. That may even happen when someone wants to give you something and you feel it necessary to refuse it so you can seem polite or not greedy.

vs. 4&5 – This perfume was expensive, worth a whole year's wages. Someone conjectured that the perfume was the woman's dowry, to be given to her groom's family when she married. I don't know about that, but this woman willingly chose to lavish her prized possession on one encounter with Jesus.

The men there were indignant and complained about this wasteful act. Not only did they complain, but they also rebuked the woman harshly. We must remember how men held women in low esteem in those days. They all felt compelled and free enough to scold her for such waste.

Is there anything you have been wanting to do for God that seems extravagant? Are you concerned about what people will think or say? I would urge you to follow in this woman's steps and go for it! Do it now and don't worry about others will say, only worry about God will think.