

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

SESSION 15: CHAPTER 13: 1 - 37 "WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?"

About 15 years before Jesus was born (20 BC), Herod the Great began to rebuild and remodel the Temple, which had stood for nearly 500 years, since the days of Ezra (Ezra 6:14-15). Herod made the Temple one of the most beautiful buildings in Jerusalem, not to honour God, but to appease the Jews whom he ruled. This magnificent structure was not completed until AD. 64. Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled in AD. 70, when the Romans completely destroyed the Temple and the entire city.



The whole chapter is introduced by a double question about the Temple. Herod's Temple, still incomplete in Jesus' day, had the reputation of being the most beautiful building in the whole world, and was certainly the largest and most imposing structure for hundreds of miles in any direction. Jesus solemnly predicts that the whole thing will be demolished—putting into words the message he had acted out when he stopped the sacrificial system from functioning earlier in the week. The disciples are astonished. They, after all, have just said how impressed they are at the sight of the place. And they ask, not unnaturally, when these things are going to take place. NT WRIGHT

Read Mark 13: 1 - 13.

As vv. 1-4 make clear, the sayings of Jesus are all connected with the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a traumatic experience for Jew and Christian alike. It is worth remembering that Mark records these strange sayings because he perceived them as relevant for the church of his day, we must try to understand what they might have meant for them before we ask what they might mean for us!

QUESTIONS:

- 1.(a). Is there a possible link here to Zechariah 14: 1-4 which predicts that the Messiah will stand on the Mount of Olives when he returns to set up his eternal kingdom?
- (b). From the context, what are Peter, James, John and Andrew asking about in v. 4?



Why would they want to know?

- (c). Jesus doesn't seem to answer their question directly, at least not at first. What is he concerned about?
- (d). How would Jesus' warnings and encouragements (vv. 5-3) have helped the disciples in the early years of the church?
- (e) Does v.11 imply that Bible study is a waste of time?
- (e) What relevance do these warnings and encouragements have for us today?

Read Mark 13: 14 - 27.



The "desolating sacrilege" (RSV) / "abomination of desolation" (AV) is a phrase taken from the book of Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11) which there describes great hardship and troubles for Israel, including a final assault upon her religion as part of the end-time trials before God's ultimate deliverance.

This "horrible thing" Jesus mentioned is believed to be the desecration of the Temple by those who did not value God's House. In A.D. 38, the emperor Caligula planned to put his own statue in the Temple, but he died before his plans were carried out. In A.D. 70, the emperor Titus placed an idol on the site of the burned out Temple after the destruction of Jerusalem.

- 2.(a). Christians have sometimes disagreed about how to interpret Jesus' words in these verses. Some think Jesus is talking about the destruction of the temple in AD. 70 and the events leading up to that. Others think that these events are all still future. Perhaps both views are correct. What evidence is there to support each view?



- (b). What does Jesus say about God's work in the midst of all this turmoil?
- (c). Is it possible for Christians to be easily deceived (vv.21-3)?
- (d). How is the distress, in vvs. 24-27, different from what has been described in vv. 5-23?
- (e). How would these verses have encouraged the early church?

Read Mark 13: 28 - 37.



- 3.(a). Six times, Jesus warns his disciples to "watch, be on guard" (vv.5,9,23,33,35,37). Why?
- (b). Many people throughout the ages have tried to make precise predictions about the return of Jesus.
How does watching, as Jesus urges, differ from making such predictions?
- (c). How important is the Second Coming to our Christian Faith?

- (d). In what practical ways can we be alert for Jesus' return?