

Gospel Gems from Mark



Chapter 13: The end times

This chapter, like chapter 12, took place during Holy Week, only days before Jesus' crucifixion. But unlike the previous chapter, this one is centered on one particular topic: Jesus' second coming and the end of the world. It was a private conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Like all prophetic Scriptures in the New Testament, it contains a number of challenging verses. We pray for the Holy Spirit to help and guide us!



Gospel Gem #1: The signs of the end (13:1-13)

What statement of Jesus shocked the disciples into asking him about the future?

While the disciples asked Jesus about the destruction of the temple, what else did he include in his answer? (Note that according to Matthew's account of this same story, they also asked Jesus, "what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?")

There are at least six signs of the end identified in verses 5-13. Can you identify them? How is one of them different from the others?

How should we react to these events, and why? (verses 7, 8, 11 and 13 each have something to say to us)

Nearly 2000 years after Jesus said these things, what is the status of Jesus' predictions? What are the implications for our life and work?



Gospel Gem #2: The nearer future and the fall of Jerusalem (13:14-23)

In the middle part of the chapter Jesus seems to shift the emphasis back to the disciples' original question as stated above--the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

The first phrase of verse 14 is difficult. The phrase "abomination that causes desolation" is a phrase found several times in the Old Testament prophet Daniel's prophetic visions. There it seemed to predict the desecration of the temple by the wicked king Antiochus which took place c. 167 B.C. To understand what it means here, a big help can be found in Luke's account of this same address (cf. Luke 21:20ff).

How does Luke seem to paraphrase Jesus' words there? When would this new invasion of Jerusalem take place?

What instruction did Jesus give to his believers who would be living in Jerusalem at that time? (History records that the early Christians did do this and many lives were spared)

As the paragraph continues, though, many of Jesus' words would also apply equally well to the end of the world. What further instruction does he give?

What wonderful promise is given in verse 20?



Gospel Gem #3: The final end and some timeless warnings (13:24-37)

Starting in verse 24, Jesus seems clearly to be talking about the final end of the world. What dramatic events will accompany his coming?

Whom will he gather to himself? (notice for the second time what name they are given)

What picture from nature does Jesus use in verse 28 to encourage our watchfulness?

Jesus' words in verse 30 are another very challenging verse. What are some possible meanings?

What important principle does he give us in verse 31? How has it proven true over the centuries?

How is it possible that Jesus the Son of God would say he did not know when the end would come? (hint: think of what is said of Jesus during his childhood on earth; compare also John 21:17)

What final illustration and warning does Jesus leave us with in verses 34-38, and how should it inspire and guide us?

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This chapter, like chapter 12, took place during Holy Week, only days before Jesus' crucifixion. But unlike the previous chapter, this one is centered on one particular topic: Jesus' second coming and the end of the world. It was a private conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Like all prophetic Scriptures in the New Testament, it contains a number of challenging verses. We pray for the Holy Spirit to help and guide us!



Gospel Gem #1: The signs of the end (13:1-13)

What statement of Jesus shocked the disciples into asking him about the future?

He told them that the temple would be so completely destroyed that no stone would remain on top of another.

While the disciples asked Jesus about the destruction of the temple, what else did he include in his answer? (Note that according to Matthew's account of this same story, they also asked Jesus, "what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?")

Most of the chapter deals not just with the end of the temple in Jerusalem but with the end of the world.

There are at least six signs of the end identified in verses 5-13. Can you identify them? How is one of them different from the others?

1. False Messiahs; 2. Wars between nations and kingdoms; 3. Natural disasters (earthquakes & famines); 4. Persecution by authorities; 5. The Gospel preached in all the world; 6. Persecution and betrayal of Christians by their own families. The fifth sign is the only "positive" sign, the others are warnings of challenges that believers would have to endure.

How should we react to these events, and why? (verses 7, 8, 11 and 13 each have something to say to us) ***Jesus told us not to be alarmed by wars (v. 7); to recognize that like birth pains, these trials will grow more severe as the end nears (v. 8); to trust in the Holy Spirit to help us with words to speak when we are on trial (v. 11); and to stand firm to the end through every test and trial (v. 13).***

Nearly 2000 years after Jesus said these things, what is the status of Jesus' predictions? What are the implications for our life and work? ***We can surely regard them all as fulfilled, so that the end could come at any time. However, they can still be fulfilled even more fully as time goes on.***



Gospel Gem #2: The nearer future and the fall of Jerusalem (13:14-23)

In the middle part of the chapter Jesus seems to shift the emphasis back to the disciples' original question as stated above--the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

The first phrase of verse 14 is difficult. The phrase "abomination that causes desolation" is a phrase found several times in the Old Testament prophet Daniel's prophetic visions. There it seemed to predict the desecration of the temple by the wicked king Antiochus which took place c. 167 B.C. To understand what it means here, a big help can be found in Luke's account of this same address (cf. Luke 21:20ff). How does Luke seem to paraphrase Jesus' words there? When would this new invasion of Jerusalem take place? ***Instead of referring to the abomination of desolation, Luke quotes Jesus as saying here that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies. As in the days of Antiochus, Gentile enemies would destroy the shrine of Israel's God--this time for good. These words were fulfilled about 40 years after Jesus spoke, in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.***

What instruction did Jesus give to his believers who would be living in Jerusalem at that time? (History records that the early Christians did do this and many lives were spared)

He told them to flee Jerusalem rather than remaining in the city.

As the paragraph continues, though, many of Jesus' words would also apply equally well to the end of the world. What further instruction does he give?

He again told them to watch out for false prophets false claims of his coming, and to watch out for even miracles that were intended to deceive.

What wonderful promise is given in verse 20?

God who still is in control of all things will limit the trials his chosen believers must suffer so that their faith does not fail.



Gospel Gem #3: The final end and some timeless warnings (13:24-37)

Starting in verse 24, Jesus seems clearly to be talking about the final end of the world.

What dramatic events will accompany his coming? ***The heavenly bodies will fall and be darkened at Jesus' coming (this is a quotation from Isaiah 13:10).***

Whom will he gather to himself? (notice for the second time what name they are given)

All "his elect"--the people that God has chosen for salvation through faith in Jesus.

What picture from nature does Jesus use in verse 28 to encourage our watchfulness?

Just as the changes happening to a tree in spring indicates the coming of summer, so the signs of the end should point to the sure approach of his second coming.

Jesus' words in verse 30 are another very challenging verse. What are some possible meanings?

The destruction of Jerusalem was only about 40 years away when Jesus spoke, so it makes sense that he would say that it would happen within the lifetime of that generation. It's harder to see how this verse applies to Judgment Day; the NIV footnote suggests the alternative translation "race" instead of "generation."

What important principle does he give us in verse 31? How has it proven true over the centuries?

Jesus' word will never pass away. In spite of the efforts of countless false teachers and powerful rulers to exterminate him and his teachings, they have remained to this day. And his words have continued to be proven true, including his predictions in this very chapter!

How is it possible that Jesus the Son of God would say he did not know when the end would come?

(hint: think of what is said of Jesus during his childhood on earth; compare also John 21:17)

During his time of humiliation on earth, Jesus did not fully use his divine power and wisdom. This is why he could be said to grow in wisdom in his youth, although he remained truly God (cf. Luke 2:52). After his resurrection, he accepted the praise of Peter who declared that he knew all things. In his exalted state today, Jesus is fully aware of the day of his return as the glorified God-man.

What final illustration and warning does Jesus leave us with in verses 34-38, and how should it inspire and guide us? *He compares it to a man going away on a journey and leaving each of his people with an appointed task. His words remind us to be constantly aware of his return--and to make sure that we are worshipping and serving him with our lives every day! A longer version of this same truth is presented in Jesus' parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30.*