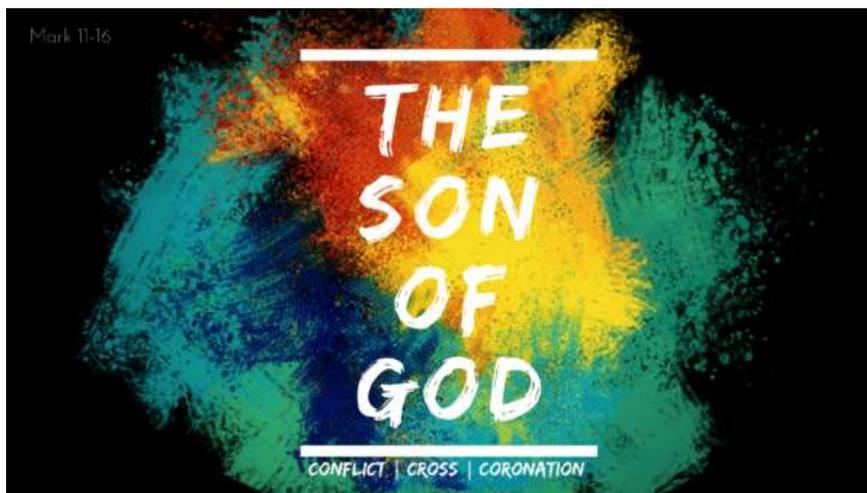


# It's Time to Listen and See



## Mark 13:1-23

I got distracted last night. We picked our daughter, KiKi, up from Nashville and brought her home, so as I was finishing early this morning, I just couldn't decide on a title for our text. I just jotted down, "It's time to listen and see." I pray that God truly opens our eyes to see, and He opens our ears to hear. We know He takes His Word through the anointing of the Holy Spirit and does that. Open to Mark chapter 13. Kory was gracious enough to let me have this passage of Scripture. Scholars believe it is the most difficult of all of the passages in Mark's gospel. It's one of those passages that if you check out about ten or twelve different people think, not one of them is going to agree. If I can be totally honest with you, of all the people that I've read and studied, I haven't found anyone yet who I agree with on this passage in its entirety. I don't even know if I agree with what I believe about this passage. This is a difficult passage of Scripture. So we're going to be speaking through the entire chapter over the next few weeks, but we're going to try as best we can to get down to verse 23 this morning. Studying all week long, I have the picture in my mind of Celisa and me in Israel standing at the Wailing Wall surrounded by Jewish people, who are not believers in Christ, and they're praying for God to send the

Messiah and I'm standing there with them. I haven't written a prayer on a piece of paper and stuck it in one of the cracks like the Jewish people do, but I'm praying, "God, take Your Bible and open their eyes. Jesus clearly revealed Himself as the Messiah when He was here." My mind went to this passage where He actually prophesied while He was here about the destruction of that very temple and the very city. You've got to understand that it's kind of with a sad heart that I share this because I know what Jesus knew, and that is so many people are not going to believe what He was going to say about the destruction of the temple. If you'll remember, when Jesus got to Jerusalem, He immediately went to the temple. He didn't cleanse it; He cleared it out. Just like the fig tree that had no purpose that Jesus took out, the temple served no purpose. There was not a sacrifice that could be made on that altar of a bull or a goat that could make man right with God. Mark is trying to tell us the only thing that could open the way into the very presence of God is the death of Jesus on a cross. That's why later in the gospel when Jesus dies, Mark is going to tell us that veil in the temple is going to be torn from top to bottom, signifying to us that the way into the presence of God has been made through the blood of the Lamb of God. This passage we're going to read this morning would have shocked the disciples to hear what Jesus is going to say about the temple. It's being built; it was not finished yet and will not be finished until a few years before it will be destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, but they've been working on it for forty-six years. It was a magnificent building.

Let's read Mark 13 down to verse 23. If time permits, we will try to speak through all the verses. This is not going to be a preaching passage; this is going to be a teaching passage. We're just going to walk through this verse by verse, so please keep your bibles open. We will also read again verses 7&14 back to back.

### **Scripture**

***"And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great***

***buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."***

***And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that it may not happen in winter. For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened***

***the days. And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand."***

***7) "And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet."***

***14) "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."***

Do you see that change? He first says when you hear, don't be alarmed, but when you see, get out of the city.

(Prayer)

Father, we ask You to add Your blessings to the reading of this Your Word. Open our eyes through Your Spirit to hear, let us understand, give us spiritual insight into this truth. This passage is so controversial. We don't want it to be, we just want it to be simply proclaimed as the truth. Father, when this message is over, I pray that we understand that this is another lesson Mark records so that the disciples will understand what it means to be a disciple. There are times in our lives when it's time to watch, time to speak, time to trust, time to endure. Father, just as Jesus was going to encourage that first generation of believers with this truth, may it encourage us in our generation. Anoint us now by Your Spirit to speak, anoint us by Your Spirit to listen, but do not let us be speakers or hearers only. Let us be doers of Your Word. It's in Your Son's name we pray, amen.

Please note this is not an historical diary of the life of Christ. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ according to Mark. He has a purpose. Jesus is now leaving the temple where He has been teaching. He's already given us the picture that the temple is barren, and He has cleared it out. He now leaves that temple and someone still doesn't get it. Instead of focusing on what Jesus is saying about the temple, instead of seeing all the religious leaders who

are standing in opposition to Jesus who are questioning His authority, one of the disciples looks at Jesus and brags about the exterior of the buildings and how massive and beautiful they are. Can you imagine how Jesus must have felt? When He is looking at what's going on, on the inside, they're only seeing the outside, so He says 'it's impressive but I just want you to know the days are coming when there won't be one stone left on another stone.' Some of these stones were forty feet by fifteen feet by twelve feet. This area covered thirty-five acres. Josephus said that if you stood on the Mount of Olives, looked over at Mount Moriah, and saw the temple complex, it looked like a mountain of gold, and Jesus just prophesied there wouldn't be a stone left standing in God's house.

Mark, and the immediacy of the gospel trying to rush us to the cross, actually slows down here. But he quickly takes Jesus from the temple to being on the Mount of Olives, and it's about one hundred and fifty feet above the temple sight. They are looking down at the temple and Jesus is sitting opposite the temple. Just as when He was in the temple He sat opposite of the treasury observing people, now He's observing these buildings. Now, anytime there is a private conversation in Mark's gospel we open up our ears, our notepad out, and our spiritual antennae up because we know something important is coming. Peter, James, John, and Andrew publicly, not privately, ask Jesus two things. When will this happen? What will the sign be? I want to make sure everybody agrees on what we're talking about here. Jesus just prophesied about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, and privately, four of His disciples asked Him the questions when, and what will the sign be. They're asking this before it's going to be destroyed so they'll know when it's going to be destroyed. Does everybody agree? In Mark's gospel, they only ask Jesus two questions. There is no question in their minds about a second coming of Jesus in this passage. Why? Because they don't even believe He's going away the first time. If you don't believe someone is going away the first time, you're not going to be asking when they are coming back. That doesn't mean He's not coming back, and that doesn't mean He's not going away. They don't get it. But the questions they're asking is when will the temple be destroyed, and what will the sign be when all this is going to be accomplished, when will every stone be torn down. Jesus says beware, be

on guard, open your eyes, see that no one leads you astray, and He begins to teach there will actually be people who will come and claim to be Him, and if possible, they're going to try and deceive them.

Then Jesus begins to talk about things they're going to hear. He says 'when you hear these things, don't be alarmed, the end is not yet.' This means the end of the temple is not yet, so don't be alarmed when you hear about these things. Then He begins to say this is what you're going to hear. You're going to hear rumors of war. You're going to hear of wars. You're going to hear of earthquakes. You're going to hear of famines. He says when you start hearing these things, know that the end is not near. As a matter of fact, it's just the beginning of birth pains. So according to Jesus, these are the signs that would accompany the destruction of the temple. Probably half of us in here know about birth pains. Really, the other half kind of know too; we just get a different view of it than the female has. Basically, they start out slight and far apart and then they begin to intensify and closer together. Then they intensify more, get closer together, and then you get an epidural, amen! The pain stops. Now, birth pains are designed to let us know the baby is coming. In this first section of Scripture, Jesus is teaching the things you will hear, (war, rumors of war, earthquakes, famine) don't let any of that alarm you. But birth pains alarm us.

I remember Celisa having her first birth pain with KiKi, and we got alarmed. As fast as we could, we got to the hospital...about three days too early! We could have slowed down and taken our time, but no, no we didn't. We got there quickly because we were trained and ready. I was the first generation of dads where I was going to get to go in and see the baby born because I had been through the special training called Lamaze. Did any of you do that? We went to class after class where we sat on the floor, I sat across from Celisa, and they tried to tell us what this would be like. I was supposed to come up with these pictures in my mind and project them on the wall. When those pains got bad, I was supposed to tell her about the pictures I wanted her to focus on, and she was supposed to see it in her mind. When she saw it in her mind, I was supposed to say, "Now breathe." She was supposed to breathe and it was all supposed to be

good...until we got to a certain point. God bless my wife, but there was a point when she told me what to do with the breathing and the pictures! I left the room...I went out and sat where the men are supposed to sit. I mean, these are birth pains! A baby is coming. I'll never forget our first grandchild, Crider. Katie let us know they were going to the hospital in Paducah, so we left. Now we're going to be grandparents! It's about a thirty-five minute drive and we get to exit 7 where Lourdes Hospital is, and Celisa decides to call just to see where Katie is at. It's her first child. I already had plans. We will go to Outback at exit 4 and have a nice steak dinner. We will get there hours later and sit through the night with them. We got almost to exit 7 when Celisa called, and Kory said, "Mom, she had a contraction." Celisa got alarmed! She would not let me pass exit 7. I had to take exit 7 and go to the hospital. I didn't get to go to Outback, and I'm upset about it. Twenty-six hours later Crider was born. I could have gotten a shift at Outback and worked a whole shift, had supper, and still would have had time to witness the birth of my first grandson!

Why is it we human beings don't listen to Jesus and we get so alarmed over birth pains? Listen to what Jesus said. Birth pains are not a sign of the end; they are the sign of the beginning, and the end is not yet. What end is He talking about? If He's answering the question (and He may not be), He is talking about the end of the temple and when it will be destroyed. And then Jesus talks about birth pains.

Then Jesus tells us to be on guard, to be watching. Why? He then begins to describe some things that are going to happen. The believers will be delivered over to Jewish councils, and they're going to be beaten. They're going to stand before governors, before kings, for God's sake. They're going to witness to them. Did you hear this? During this time that Jesus is prophesying about before the temple is going to be destroyed, it's going to be a time for the early Christians to not only watch, but a time for them to understand they're going to be persecuted. While they're being persecuted and being dragged before people who oppose them, who do not agree with them, who do not follow Christ, this is going to be a glorious opportunity for them to witness for Jesus' sake. Jesus says, "And the gospel first must be proclaimed to all the nations." What is Jesus trying to

say? Jesus knows He's going away, but they don't get it yet. He knows after He goes away, because this temple will be destroyed there will be hostility between Jews and Christians. He knows the Jews are going to do everything they can to take the Christians out because they believe they're heretical, blasphemous. They're following a guy who believed He was God. They're following a guy who says He's the Jewish Messiah and they do not believe it, so there is going to be hostility toward the early Christians. I don't know about you, but sometimes when there is persecution, problems, tribulation, or discouragement, we lose focus. (Do any of you ever have this problem with your eye focusing on you, how it is going in your life, how bad you've got it?) Here's what Jesus is saying, 'during this time before the temple is destroyed, every time you get persecuted, know it is an opportunity for you to be My witness, and the primary priority during this time is the proclamation of the gospel. I don't want just the Jewish nation hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ; I want the good news of Me being the Messiah taken to all the Gentile nations of the world! When they drag you in front of kings and governors, I don't want you to even think about what you're going to say because at that moment the Holy Spirit will speak.' Now listen, we don't have the discourse yet, but in John 13-17, we have the discourse of the Holy Spirit and how when Jesus goes away, the Holy Spirit will come. He will not live among us; He will live in us, empower us, and be our helper. Jesus is going to give you the words to speak. Wow! In other words, what He's trying to say is there will be moments in a believer's life when they won't have time to have a speech prepared. In that moment, don't rest in your flesh, don't try to come up with words of flattery, don't come up with philosophical arguments, just trust the Holy Spirit to speak through you. What comes out of your mouth will be from God. Don't take this out of context as a preacher or teacher and think you cannot study, just get up, and God fill you with the Spirit. No, this is telling us what goes on in the life of the early church and those early disciples that when they were persecuted, the Holy Spirit of God spoke through them so that they would be a witness. Is that not exactly what Acts chapter 1 said, that when the Holy Spirit comes on the church, we would be His witnesses starting in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth?

See, it was time for them to watch, it was time for them to speak to proclaim the gospel, it was time for them to trust in the Holy Spirit of God to empower them and enable them. Why? Because He says brothers are going to hand brothers over to the authorities to have them put to death, and fathers, children, children, parents. Now, they're following who they believe is the Messiah, and He tells them before this temple is destroyed, you're going to be hated for My name's sake. Wow! Boy, we've really got it bad when we have family squabbles over religion. We fight over immersion and sprinkling, security and non-security. Can you imagine having a brother who is so opposed to you believing in the Christ as the Messiah that he handed you over to be killed, fathers turned on their sons and daughters, and children on their parents?

Don't ever take this next verse out of context. The next verse says, "And he that endures to the end will be saved." In being a disciple of Jesus Christ, Jesus is not only calling that first generation to watchfulness, to proclaiming the gospel, to walk and trust in the Spirit of God, but He's calling them to endure. You know we like to say here at Hardin that if your moment of faith is real, it will issue into a life of faith. If it doesn't, you didn't have a moment of saving faith. Jesus believed with all of His heart that those who really knew Him would have this quality, this character that enabled them to endure the beginning of these birth pains that was signaling the temple would be destroyed. It's not signaling it is close to being destroyed yet. Does that make sense in the context?

Look at verse 14. "But..." whoa! Mark is a storyteller. You guys know this, but this is the longest discourse of Mark in the entire gospel. In other chapters of Mark, we've got five or six things going on, one right after another. But in this chapter, he slows down and tells us this whole discourse because it's so important for us to understand what's going to happen to that first generation of believers that will experience the destruction of the Jewish temple. You've got to realize that the gospel came first to the Jew, and then to the Gentile. We've got to realize that the foundation of the early church were Jewish believers. Now, they're going to see before their very eyes the same thing the Old Testament prophets prophesied about and that is the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. In

verse 14, it says "but when you see." Now watch this. The reason we read 7 and 14 together is because you've got to see this thought. These are the two main thoughts. When you hear, don't be alarmed. Keep watching, keep proclaiming, keep trusting, and keep enduring. But when you see the abomination of desolation, there's a parentheses in Matthew that says "(let the reader understand.)" Mark is writing to a Gentile church, but Matthew adds in chapter 24, because he's writing to the Jews, "when you see the abomination of desolation taking place, spoken of by the prophet Daniel." See, in Daniel chapter 9 and 11, Daniel talked about a coming day in the future when there would be an abomination of desolation. The general thought is there is a day coming when the city and the temple are going to be destroyed. Hold it. Daniel is writing in captivity. Nebuchadnezzar has already destroyed the city and the temple, so what is Daniel talking about? Daniel, who gets a prophecy from God about the future coming of the Kingdom of God, knows the city and the temple is going to be rebuilt. But Daniel sees that even that rebuilt temple and city that will usher in the messianic kingdom, not the building of them, but in that day he sees both of them being destroyed. Now Jesus quotes the prophecy of Daniel and says it will be fulfilled in the destruction of the temple.

I get tickled. Many of my favorite commentaries tell me the abomination of desolation actually took place with Antiochus Epiphanies, who came down in 165 BC, and went into the temple and offered a pig on the altar. I just have to ask this question. Are you going to believe man, or are you going to believe God? Are you going to believe a man who tells you this happened there, or are you going to believe Jesus who tells you it happened here? Jesus says the abomination of desolation is going to take place, and He is talking about the temple being destroyed in their lifetime, AD 70. He says when you see this start to take place, if you're in Judea, get into the mountains. If you're walking on your rooftop and you see it start to take place, don't even go into the house to get your belongings. Get out of the house, out of the city. If you're out in the field and you see it start to take place, don't even go home and get your cloak, and you know how people felt about their cloaks then. He says let's wail, let's pity, let's feel bad for women who are pregnant and nursing a child, and let's pray this doesn't happen in the wintertime.

I remember being a young believer teaching Sunday school at Ledbetter Baptist Church and my uncle, Glen Sheppard, was a member of the church, and whenever they would have those family discussions about the Second Coming of Jesus, Uncle Glen would open up this passage. He would look at me; I don't know why because I was about fifteen or sixteen years old, but he was say, "This doesn't make sense." My Uncle Glen had always been taught that this was speaking about the rapture of the church when Jesus comes a second time. He would say, "Why does it matter if it's in the wintertime? Why does it matter if you're pregnant? Why does it matter if you're nursing a child? Why are we supposed to go to the hills? Does that make good sense?" I didn't know what to say because I wasn't going to go against what everybody teaches in Western Kentucky. But I want to say if my Uncle Glen were here today, I would say, "This isn't talking about the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. This is talking about the destruction of the temple. Who do I know that? Read Luke chapter 21:20. Luke doesn't call it the abomination of desolation because he's writing to Theophilus and he doesn't use the language of the Old Testament. He just says 'when you see the army surround Jerusalem.' What is the abomination of desolation? It's when the armies of Rome surrounded Jerusalem, ransacked the city, and burned down the temple. Jesus is saying the temple is going to be destroyed, don't run to the city, don't run to the temple, and don't think when the armies of Rome march against the nation that you're going to find salvation inside the temple. It's not going to do you any good to go to the altar and offer a sacrifice. It's not going to do you any good to go to this place you think is a house of prayer. You've made it a den of thieves. No, when the army surrounds Jerusalem, there won't be any salvation in Jerusalem. The city is going to be destroyed and you better get out of the city into the hills. You better not even grab anything out of your house, because if you get caught inside that city, you're going to die. I've got to be honest with you, if I had been raised my whole life to believe that the strength of our nation was our walls around our city and I'm out in the country, as soon as I see an army coming, I'm getting into the city and hide behind those walls. The modern day equivalent would be a nation trusting in their military might. He who has the biggest military is the country you want to be a part of.

Jesus says no...don't trust in the temple, trust in Me. If you really believe I'm the Messiah, I'm telling you the temple is going to be destroyed. Let me tell you what's going to happen. Look at the next verse, there will be tribulation like there has never been, and tribulation like there will never be. Whoa! Again, do you believe Jesus or not? Jesus said the greatest time of tribulation was the time right before the house of God in Jerusalem was destroyed. Josephus writes that when the armies of Rome came into the city after a three year siege, there were so many dead corpses that the hooves of their horses never set foot on the earth. Josephus has accounts to where mommas made bargains of which child they were going to eat first. The Roman government, according to Josephus, put crosses all around the city. When someone tried to flee the city, they were crucified and they cut their belly open because they had swallowed their coins, gold, and silver, and they would extract that from their belly. Wow. I want you to catch this. If you're a true follower of Jesus, you aren't going to be in that city because you believe His word. If you don't, there will be a consequence. Why can't we get that today? There is a consequence when we go against the Word of God.

Now, get this picture. It's going to be so bad that Jesus says if God hadn't shortened the days, there wouldn't be anybody who would have survived. He did it for the sake of the elect. I get tickled because there are many people today who do not believe in the doctrine of election, but Jesus did. Jesus clearly teaches here that you don't get elected because you chose God. You're the elect because God chose you. Jesus believed there was a remnant. Jesus believed there was an elect. Jesus believed there were a people who God had chosen. In the first half of this, for God's sake, we're supposed to speak and endure. For our sake, the elect's sake, God shortens the days of this terrible tribulation.

Then Jesus ends with these words. 'Watch, because I've told you all things.' So can we say this? The people who stayed in the city and lost their lives are not on God. Jesus warned them. The principle of this passage is still true today. We still face times of persecution and opposition, and those persecutions to us in this generation still give us great opportunities to witness for Christ and let the Holy Spirit of God

speaking through us. When the world is hostile toward us, we still have that ability to endure because at all times we're watching. We're listening, we're watching. Can I just say this? When Jesus warns, we had better listen because His Word always comes true. Can we draw this from this passage? Next week, we're going to finish this. Jesus didn't pull out charts. What He really did was emphasize how to live because it's going to get bad. Hey guys, it could get really bad, even here in America, even here in the Bible belt. Let's be ready, and let's keep the priority the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ, because we want the gospel taken to all the nations of the world. We want everyone to hear what we've heard, and that's the good news of God's Son Jesus Christ. I know we're stopping right in the middle, but we're going to pick it up next week because something is going to happen after this time of tribulation.