

Watchful and Faithful: Following Jesus in Troubled Times (Daniel 9:24-27 and

Mark 13:1-23)

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Daniel 9:24-27

²⁴ “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

²⁵ “Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. ²⁶ After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. ²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

Mark 13:1-23

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

13 As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

² “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.”

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

⁵ Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁸ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

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.

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 Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one 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 housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. ¹⁶ Let no one in the field go back to get their 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 equalled 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 Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. ²² For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³ So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

There are Bibles in front of you

And a sermon outline

Please have your Bibles opened up at Mark 13 starting at verse 1.

Let me pray first...

Context: History of the Temple

Last week - Jesus was in the temple courts watching people putting in their offerings

And a **widow** gave all she had..

This week – in Mark 13:1-23 – **Jesus is still in the Temple area**

Look at v1 – His **disciples are marvelling at the temple** in Jerusalem! They say

“what magnificent buildings”

And **they’re right** – it is a magnificent Temple!

Before we look at the passage in Mark though – let’s do **a brief history of the**

Temple

[Slide-Tabernacle]

[Explain purpose of Temple – God’s presence and sacrifice for sin – initially a mobile tent tabernacle/temple]

[Then a building]

[Slide-Solomon’s Temple]

The first temple was built by **King Solomon [Son of King David] in 587BC**

[Explain Temple] – and **stood until 587BC** when the **Babylonians ransacked** Jerusalem

[Slide-Solomon’s Temple – exile]

The **people** of Jerusalem were **exiled in Babylon for 70 years**

Then in **538BC** the Jewish people were **allowed to return** to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple

In **536BC** the **work on the Temple began** but there were **long delays**

People like **Haggai and Zechariah encouraged** the **people** to keep **rebuilding** the temple

Finally in **516BC** The **Temple** was **finished** and **dedicated** to God (Ezra 6:15)

[Slide-Zerubbabel's Temple]

This **second temple** is often referred to as **Zerubbabel's Temple** because he was the **governor of Judea** at the time **[Explain Temple not as grand – some cried]**

From **516BC** to **19BC** – the **second Temple** remained as it was

[Slide-3 Temples]

Around about **19BC** **King Herod the Great** started **major renovations** of the 2nd temple which were **still going on** in **Jesus' time** – **30AD**.

As you can see **Herod** made **substantial renovations**

[Slide-Comparison]

And if you **compare Herod's Temple with Solomon's** – the **differences are huge!**

Herod had **no mandate from God** to do this – by the way

But **Herod** certainly **gained a lot of praise** for doing it

The Jewish historian **Josephus** said **Jerusalem** was the **religious showpiece of the Roman World** at the time!

However everyone knew **Herod**

- Was not from **King David's line**
- He was an **Idumean** (Edomite), not fully Jewish by pedigree
- He was a **puppet king** - installed by **Rome**
- And he was **brutal, paranoid and violent** (even killing family members)

So the **praise given** was often:

- For the **temple building**
- Not for the **builder**

Back to Mark 13...

And Jesus makes a **prophecy about the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem**

Jesus is speaking around about 30AD.

Prophecy about the Destruction of Temple (vv2-4; 14-20)

[Slide-Temple destroyed]

V2 - Jesus agrees it's a great temple/buildings but it's going to get destroyed – ***not one stone left on top of another*** – He says!

V4 - The disciples ask Jesus 2 questions – ***WHEN will these things happen*** - and - ***WHAT will be the sign that they are about to be fulfilled?***

The disciples asked these question – perhaps because - they **realized what happened the last time the temple was destroyed** when the Babylonians invaded in 587BC and the people of Southern Israel were judged by God and sent into exile in Babylon. And the **disciples are thinking, if the temple is to be destroyed again**, then **what will become of Israel and the Jews? Will we get exiled again?**

Jesus doesn't answer the when – but He does give **signs** to look out for - **from verses 14 to 20**

See v14 – He says – **one of the signs will be** - when you see the '***abomination that causes desolation – that stands where it does not belong***'

What does that mean?

Abomination=*a detestable obscene evil thing related to idols/idolatry*

Desolation = *a state of complete emptiness or destruction*

So Jesus is saying to the disciples - there's a **time coming in the future** when **something so evil, so obscene, so wicked**, will happen in the Holy city of **Jerusalem** and in this **temple**

Originally this expression "***the abomination that causes desolation***" was first quoted in our Old Testament (OT) reading – from **Daniel 9:27** as a **prophecy**. Jesus is picking up on this expression "***abomination that causes desolation***" from Daniel.

And an **abomination** like this had **already occurred** before Jesus time...

Back in **168BC** – a Greek King – **Antiochus Epiphanes IV**– **raided the temple** in Jerusalem – **stole its treasures, set up an altar to the Greek God, Zeus** and **sacrificed pigs on the altar**

Thus **desecrating God's Holy temple!**

He also **slaughtered many Jews** and **sold others to slavery**

Jews were ordered to **sacrifice to pagan gods** and **eat pig flesh**

Proper **Jewish sacrifices were stopped for 3 ½ years**

Until the Jews revolted – and a Jewish man called **Judas Macabeus** led the

Maccabean revolt and the **Temple was eventually rededicated**. [**Mention**

Hannukah –**one day's oil lasted 8 days - festival of lights** – **Jesus the Light of the World-Bondi**]

[Slide-Temple destroyed]

Jesus is saying, **another** “*abomination that causes desolation*” will happen to **Jerusalem** and the **temple - AGAIN** - in the **future**

And when that happens – He says...

Don't hang around – v14 – flee to the mountains

Don't even bother going home for clothes – v15-16

[a bit like if we had a bush fire near a home – we just clear out – no going back for stuff]

It's going to be a **terrible time for pregnant woman and nursing mothers** – v17

And Jesus says, **pray it's not in winter** – v18

It's going to be **one of the worst times in history** – v19

We **fast forward** from Jesus' time – from **30AD** to **70AD**

In 70AD – The **Roman Emperor Titus** invaded Israel

The **people crowded into the city of Jerusalem** from the countryside

Titus starved the people

The situation was made **more complicated** by the fact that in the city itself – there were **factions and groups who were false Messiahs and prophets who were saying follow them** – and you will be saved. When people are in a crisis they are desperate, and **desperation makes people susceptible and gullible.**

These **false Messiahs and false prophets** will be **persuasive, even convincing!**

Jewish historian, **Josephus**, says – **97,000 people were taken prisoner** and **1,100,000 were slowly starved or killed by the sword**

Only those who took Jesus advice and fled to the hills were saved!

You **may recall** that a week earlier in Jesus' life when He rode into Jerusalem – on that **very first Palm Sunday** – Luke's Gospel tells us – “*As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he **wept over it***” (Luke 19:41) – why? Because Jesus can see ahead what terrible things will happen to Jerusalem in 70AD – all because the people did not receive Jesus and believe He is the Messiah!

Warnings of persecutions to come (vv9-13)

[Slide-persecutions]

Jesus hasn't finished with His warnings yet..

In verses 9 to 13 Jesus **warns the disciples they will face persecutions for being His followers:**

- V9-They will be **flogged in synagogues** – this happened to the disciples in the **Early Church in the Book of Acts**
- V9-They will be **dragged before governors and kings** – this happened to the Apostle Paul – also in the **Book of Acts**
- V10-But **it's all necessary** - because - **the Gospel – Good News of Jesus - must first be preached to ALL nations**
- V12-Family members will **betray** each other
- V13-Christians will be **hated** because of Jesus
- **Christians are persecuted today** too – all over the world!
 - **North Korea** where owning a Bible can get you killed
 - **Somalia** where following Jesus makes you the enemy
 - **Libya** where evangelism is a death sentence

- **Eritrea** where imprisonment for following Jesus is inevitable
- **Yemen** where Christians are on extremists' "wanted" list
- **Nigeria** where a Christian dies nearly every two hours
- **Pakistan** where Christians are second class citizens
- **Sudan** where Christians are caught in the cross fire of a civil war!
- **Iran** where being a Christian is a crime against national security
- **Afghanistan** where the Taliban state there are no Christians!

Warnings to be on Our Guard (vvv5-8, 21-23)

Because of what lies ahead and the persecutions...

[Slide-Warnings]

In verses 5 to 8 and 21 to 23 – **Jesus warns His disciples to be on their guard.**

V5 - Jesus warns His disciples to **watch out for deceivers**

We also have to **watch out for deceivers**

Here's **some ways we can be deceived today:**

1. **A Distorted View of Jesus** - Believing in a version of Jesus who is less than what Scripture says (e.g., Jesus is **only a good teacher**, not our **Lord** and not our **Saviour**).

2. **False or Unbalanced Teaching** - Teachings that sound biblical but minimize: **repentance; suffering; holiness and the authority of Scripture.** We hear people say "*God is loving and He wants us to be happy – so He can't be against same-sex attraction and same sex-relationships*". But the truth is God wants us to be

obedient and Jesus says “**if you love me, you will obey my commands**” (John 14:15)

3. Cultural Pressure and Compromise: Gradually adopting the values of the world instead of being shaped by God’s Word (Romans 12:2).

4. Signs, Experiences, and Personalities: Putting too much emphasis on emotional experiences or following charming charismatic leaders above Christ-centred preaching (Mark 13:22; 1 John 4:1).

5. Spiritual Drift and Apathy: Not outright rebellion — just a slow neglect of prayer, Scripture, and watchfulness (Hebrews 2:1).

6. Misplaced Ultimate Loyalty: When allegiance to nation or political party subtly rivals allegiance to Jesus. Remember our citizenship is in Heaven! (Philippians 3:20).

7. Speculation About the End Times: spending hours and hours coming up with overconfident predictions about the End of the World, that go beyond what Jesus actually said (Mark 13:32).

Jesus says in V6 & 21&22-**Many will come claiming to be the Messiah returning – but they are deceivers!**

V7-There will be **all sorts of wars, and rumours of wars –**

V8- Nation and kingdoms at loggerheads – and earthquakes and famines

But it's not the end of the world – this is just birth pains – this is just the start!

All of these things Jesus warns the disciples about – Happened in their time - and are happening today

But it's not the end...

Application to us

The prophecies that Jesus gives are ALWAYS true.

We've seen how the prophecy about the temple came true

Here's what the Temple looks like today!

[Slide-Mosque/Wailing Wall]

Just a wailing wall **[people recite psalms, pray, place prayers in the wall]** that's all that's left of Herod's Temple!

And there's an Islamic Mosque on site of original temple!

[Slide-Application-pattern]

But what Jesus is describing in these verses is a recurring pattern.

Because the Bible presents this “**abomination that causes desolation**” as a **recurring pattern** that intensifies over time.

This **abomination that causes desolation** amounts to:

- False worship replacing true worship
- Human or demonic power claiming what only belongs to God
- God's people facing persecution and pressure to compromise

- **Then finally - Judgment and deliverance follow**

This pattern appears:

- In **Daniel**
- In **167BC**
- In **70AD**
- And will appear in a climax at the **end of the age**

Our Old Testament Reading from Daniel 9:24-27 looks forward to a **final expression of “*the abomination that causes desolation*”**

Daniel 9:24–27 teaches:

1. God has a **sovereign timetable**.
2. God’s Anointed One – **Jesus - will deal with sin and death**.
3. History will include **recurring abominations and persecutions**
4. But **evil has an expiration date**.

The final word is not **desolation**.

The final word is **God’s judgment** and **God’s righteousness in Jesus**.

The New Testament presents this abomination not just as an event, but as a person who embodies it. We sometimes refer to that person as the **Antichrist**

- 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 – calls this person “*the man of lawlessness*”
- 1 John 2:18 – tells us “*many antichrists have come... but a final Antichrist is coming*”
- Revelation 13 – describes this Antichrist *as a beast who demands worship*

The final Antichrist is the **ultimate expression** of the pattern described in Daniel and Mark 13

[Application]

The way this will play out **depends on our view of the Temple.**

There are **two views of the Temple in the future:**

1. Literal view

- The **Temple is rebuilt and temple worship restored** – and **sacrifices for sin are restored** – but remember **sacrifices for sin are not needed anymore** because **we have Jesus** – who made the once and for all sacrifice for sin!
- Then there is a **future desecration of the Temple by the Antichrist!**

2. New Covenant view-Spiritual View

Jesus is the Temple – a Spiritual temple (John 2:19)

- **God's people are seen as a Holy Temple in the Lord** – the **worldwide Church** (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21)
- And at some point in the future - **The Antichrist infiltrates, deceives, and corrupts from within the visible worldwide church**

Regardless of which view we have of the future temple

For us...

1. We can **expect persecutions** for being Christians – and **this can take many forms!**

2. Despite these persecutions – v10 – **the Gospel must be preached to all nations – that's our job**
3. We can **expect false Messiahs** – people claiming to be Jesus, **expect deceivers and false teachers** – **but remember we have our fact-checker – the Bible!**
4. We can **expect wars** (Ukraine and Gaza) and rumours of wars (USA and Iran). We can **expect nations to be at loggerheads** (look at USA foreign policy – look at terrorism – Bondi etc.).
We can **expect earthquakes, floods and bush fires and famines** – look at how many **natural disasters** there have been in the last few years!
Jesus tells us 2 things about this - we need to *watch out we're not deceived* (v5) – *we need to be on our guard* (v23) and **that it's not the end – it's the END TIMES!** (v7)
- [Next week we'll continue with Mark 13 and talk about the End!]**
5. The Temple in Jerusalem might have been destroyed – and replaced with a mosque and temple dome. **But Jesus is our temple now** (John 2:13-22) – **so true believers in Jesus have a personal temple – it's Jesus!**
Everyone on this planet is invited to come to Jesus – the Temple!
6. And **our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit** – (John 14:15-21; 1 Cor 6:19-20). **And Jesus promises in Mark 13:11** – that during our lives of witnessing and suffering and persecution – ***the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say.*** There is great comfort in that...

Conclusion (Mark 13:13)

And to finish up –we are living in a fallen, broken and troubled world – so, whatever we face as Christians...

We have the promise Jesus gives in v13 of Mark 13

Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Let's pray

Faithful Father, when the world is unsettled, help us to trust your purposes. Keep us from fear and deception, give us strength to endure, and courage to bear witness to Christ. Teach us to be watchful, faithful, and steadfast, until the end. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Benediction (Galatians 6:9)

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Amen.