

Gospel of Mark 24 - Chapter 13, verses 1 – 27:- Signs of the End of the Age:-

It is easier to deal with this chapter in its entirety, rather than over two weeks. Every commentary I have looked at, gives a different interpretation of this teaching by the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe the first thing to remember is that our Lord gave this teaching about the future and his return in glory for the benefit of all believers down the ages. I do not believe that it is too difficult to understand and, taken with other scripture, it should be helpful to us as we look towards the end times and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory as he promised.

Verses 1 – 4 :- The Questions by the Disciples:- We remember that most of the disciples were from outlying districts and not from the city of Jerusalem. They would be familiar with the Temple buildings but only as occasional visitors. The Jewish historian Josephus depicts the stones as being thirty-seven by twelve by eighteen feet in size and that the *“front was all polished stone insomuch that its fitness, to such as had not seen it was incredible, and to such as had seen it it was greatly amazing”* (Josephus Antiquities Vol. XV xi. 3 – 5). This glorious Temple was destroyed with the rest of the city of Jerusalem by the Roman army under Titus in A.D.70. In verse 4 there is a double question by the four disciples of the ‘inner circle’. The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24, verse 3, makes it clear what was asked. *“When will this be?”* i.e. ‘the destruction of the Temple’ and *“what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”*. The answer of the Lord Jesus can then be divided as answering these two distinct questions.

Verses 5 – 13: – Events happening in this Present Age:- This opens with a warning against a ready acceptance that the end times are here already. There will be ongoing wars, famines and earthquakes *“but the end is not yet.”* (verse 7). The opposition by both the religious - *“councils (Sanhedrins) and synagogues”* and the secular authorities *“governors and kings”* are to be seen as opportunities for witness and testimony. There will also be opposition from within family groups. The promise is that whoever is *“steadfast to the end will be saved”*. See Revelation chapter 2, verse 10.

Verses 14 – 24 :- Events centred on the Fall of Jerusalem:- *“the abomination of desolation”* is a phrase taken from the Book of Daniel chapter 9, verse 27, chapter 11, verse 31 and chapter 12, verse 11. There it referred to a profanation of the Temple by a pagan image set up for worship. At the time of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.70 the Roman military ensigns, the Eagles’ were taken into the Temple in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus urges those who would see the entry of the forces of Rome into the city to get out while they can to avoid the massacre which followed.

Many commentaries see this description as part of the ‘end times’ prophecy. In context it describes the awful events of the subjugation of the Holy Land by the Imperial Roman army, including the fall of Masada in A.D.74.

Verses 24 – 27 :- Events at the End of the Age:- The difficulty which appears in most commentaries is in the phrase *“after that tribulation”* referring back to verses 18 – 20. The question remains – does the word refer to the devastation suffered by Palestine at the hands of the Roman army; or is the greater *“tribulation”* still to come? The Gospel of Luke certainly places the time of tribulation along with the fall of Jerusalem – see Luke chapter 21, verses 20 – 24. In our reading in the Gospel of Mark, the Lord Jesus describes the cosmic events happening at the time of his return in glory. See O.T. Isaiah 13, verse 10 and 34, verse 4; Daniel 7, verse 13 and Zechariah 2 verse 6.

Verses 28 – 37: – A Stern Warning to all Believers:- Again verse 30 causes a problem when it says *“this generation will not pass away before all these things take place.”* If this referred to the fall of Jerusalem and the tribulation in Palestine at that time there would be no difficulty and we would need to take the words *“all these things”* as applying to verses 14 – 20. Looking at verse 32, we find that the timing of the end is known, during the time of the Lord Jesus Christ’s life on this earth, to God the Father only. His divine knowledge and understanding would have been laid aside as a consequence of his incarnation. This was part of the price he paid when he took flesh and became a humble servant – Philippians chapter 2, verses 6 – 8.

The most important message for us, and for all believers is in verses 33 - 37! *“Watch therefore – for you do not know when the master of the house will come”* (verse 35). It is again emphasised and reiterated at the end of the chapter in verse 37 *“What I say to you I say to all: Watch.”*

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”
(Revelation chapter 22, verse 20)