

Sunday, January 15, 2017
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Introduction to Mark 13:1-23

Prophecy in the Bible can be confusing. Often times prophecy is written poetically, so various images are used and the language can be interpreted in multiple ways. Prophecy can be used to predict the future, but details are often fuzzy and mysterious. Perhaps for these reasons and more, prophecy has been the subject of much attention over the years. Interestingly, the Puritans wrote more commentaries on the book of Revelation than on any other book of the Bible! More recently, popular books and movies have tried to illustrate for us what the end times will be like.

But what gets lost in much of the discussion about biblical prophecy is its intended purpose. Very few prophecies in Scripture are designed to let us in on future events that will take place. Most prophecy is designed to tell us something about God or something about ourselves. This passage, while offering a somewhat vague description of future events, is not designed to “let us in” on what is going to happen, but to encourage us to be faithful disciples of Jesus in the midst of very difficult trials.

Context

This passage (which has parallels in Matthew 24 and Luke 21) is often described as the “Olivet Discourse.” It is called that because by now, Jesus has entered Jerusalem and been there for at least a day or two. Taking some of his closest disciples, Jesus walks across the valley which is opposite the Temple and begins to give his disciples a different perspective on the city, both visually and metaphorically. All three Gospels record this event as taking place during passion week, which means, even as Jesus is speaking about the destruction of the Temple and the end of time, He Himself is approaching death...

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Mark 13:1-23

Key Ideas

- Be on guard. People who follow Christ will be constantly under attack—tempted through deception to abandon following Jesus.
- There will be destruction. Man-made institutions of religion will not stand against God’s judgment.
- Persecution opens the door for proclamation of the gospel. Even though Christians face persecution in this life, they will have opportunity to testify about Jesus so that the gospel might be proclaimed in all nations.

Discuss

- 1) What are some common lies that deceive people in our culture? Specifically, what lies about God and salvation are we most tempted to believe?

- 2) What habits do you have that might prevent you from being “on guard” against the lies of Satan and the world? How does Mark 13 encourage us to change those habits?

- 3) Mark 13:9-13 paints a bleak picture of what most Christians have experienced for most of history. What hope does the gospel offer for persecuted Christians?

- 4) How does persecution open the door for evangelism? Have you ever experienced that either in your own lives or in the lives of people you know?

- 5) The recurring exhortation in this passage is to be “on guard.” How can we, as a church and as a small group within the church, encourage one another to be “on guard”?