

GOSPEL^{of} MARK

Study Sheet: Mark 13 – Considering Eternity: Stay Alert!

Mark 13 is the longest connected discourse in the entire gospel, and many scholars and theologians consider it to be the most challenging part of Mark's account of Jesus' life and ministry to understand. The primary questions are, "Is Mark 13 about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem or about end times?" And "If it's about both, which parts are about the temple and which parts are about end times?" The answers to these questions have a significant influence on how one understands the entire chapter.

While the complete answer to these questions are too complex for this study guide, it is safe to say that the majority of scholars believe that some sections of Mark 13 are primarily about the destruction of the temple, some sections are primarily about end times, and some sections are about both. While this complicates a proper exegesis and application, it isn't too difficult to understand some of Jesus' main points in the discourse:

- Many signs will occur, and some will assume that the end is near. The true follower of Jesus Christ; however, will not be alarmed by the signs AND they will recognize the signs as only the beginning (verses 3-8).
- Jesus warned his disciples of the coming persecution and suffering (verses 9-13) they will experience due to their commitment to Him. This teaching, alongside other teaching, in the New Testament helps us understand that truly following Christ comes with significant risk.
- The "abomination of desolation" is originally from the book of Daniel about an event that had already happened in the past, but almost certainly also is a prediction of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- Jesus' return "on the clouds" (vs. 26 & Daniel 7) is what Christians should expect as the true sign that the end is here.
- Jesus teaches that His followers must live a life of alertness and readiness (verses 9, 23, 33, 35, 36, & 37) because nobody knows when He will return (vs. 32).

The important take-away for today's church from Mark 13 is to major on the majors. Jesus is going to return. He will make all things right as He comes to righteously judge, and therefore, we must live in light of that reality – always alert and keeping our eyes fixed on Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Mark 13 tends to be a difficult chapter to understand. Why, in general, are theological conversations about ALL the details of the text important (for example, is a particular verse about the temple or about the end times)? Is there a time when our focus on the theological details can become too much and distract us from other important things? If so, explain.
2. Why do you think Jesus commanded His disciples to stay alert so much in this chapter? What does that look like practically for today's follower of Christ?
3. How important is it for Christians to understand various Biblical factors and truths about the end times? How might we have these discussions without ostracizing the unbeliever or making others think we're all crazy?
4. There is so much in this chapter...what other verses or details stick out to you? Why? What can we learn from them?