

A Look at What's Coming Mark 13 Overview

November 2019 didn't seem a whole lot different to me than any other November in recent memory. I had a quarterly diabetes check in with my Doctor, and as was usual she asked what my goals for the next three months would be. I told her my goal was to not put on the 10# of winter weight I put on year after year. I wish I could I have had a look at what was coming.

The COVID pandemic hit a few months later in 2020 with all its protocols and requirements and shutdowns, which in my case not only made not gaining 10# easier, it made losing 70# a whole lot easier over the next two years. And along with those 70# went insulin, metphormin, lisinopril, and lipitor. In fact, in June of 2021 the official diagnosis of Type II diabetes was removed from my chart.

I wonder what other goals I might have set for 2020 if I'd had the opportunity for a look at what's coming? What would you have done differently on 2021 if in 2020 you'd had a look at what was coming? And here we are, today, standing on the cusp of a new year, facing 2022 in a world that is literally and figuratively years away from 2019. **What questions would you ask if you could get a look at what is coming in 2022?**

As we return to the gospel of Mark we find the disciples of Jesus taking advantage of just such an opportunity. They are making the most of a look at what's coming.

As they are leaving the temple complex in Jerusalem one of the disciples points out to Jesus the wonder and the majesty and the grandeur of the surrounding architecture. The temple is an engineering marvel and a cultural icon. To many Jews of the day the opulence and abundance of the Temple represented the favor of God upon the nation. It is even possible this disciple is making that exact point, that despite what Jesus has said about the cursed fig tree and the rebellious vineyard tenants, God must really be pretty happy with His people since they've built Him this magnificent house to live in.

Jesus' response gives them a look at what's coming. With divinely inspired prophetic accuracy Jesus says,

“Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be torn down.”

Beyond declaring the coming physical destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (a proclamation that corrects with severity the idea that God is satisfied with His people in their current condition), beyond prophesying an event that occurred just 35 years later, Jesus declares that the way in which the people of God experience the power and presence of God in worship and service will no longer be centralized in a building built by human hands. Sacrifices that cannot save will no longer be the means of grace in the lives of God's people. God's glory will no longer

rest in Jerusalem alone. Just days before His arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, Jesus gives His disciples a look at what's coming.

Naturally this makes at least some of the disciples curious. Peter, James, John, and Andrew, the two sets of brothers in the group of disciples, approach Jesus where He is sitting on the Mount of Olives overlooking the city, like a righteous Judge looking down on the guilty transgressor from high on the bench. They have questions. The grammatical structure of their questions points to two separate questions which Jesus answers in the rest of chapter 13. This morning, having read the chapter together, we want to take a look at what is coming in this chapter where Jesus gives His disciples a look at what is coming for them in their world.

The two questions the disciples ask are these. First, "when will these things be?" This question relates specifically to the destruction of the Temple. The second question, though it may look to us like the restatement of the first question, is different. From the grammar they use, from the content of Jesus' answer, and from the testimony of history, what has and hasn't happened in the world since that day, we find that it is a separate but related question. We might paraphrase it like this: "Given that the destruction of the Temple must surely indicate the end of the world, what signs will indicate that the end of the world is upon us?"

Now, the disciples have good reason to ask Jesus about signs and times. From the moment Jesus appeared on the public scene in Mark's gospel, his message has been clear:

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

Jesus has consistently put forth that the pivotal moment in history, that moment in time upon which the plan of God for humanity hinges, has arrived with His arrival. Jesus, in His preaching and teaching and living, has created a sensitivity to the significance of the current time in the flow of human history and the eternal purpose of God's gracious plan to glorify Himself and His Son by saving sinful humanity from wrath and justice by a personal, direct intervention. This is what we've been waiting and watching for. Jesus is the One we've heard of, the promise we've longed for, the Savior we need, the hope of reconciliation with God and of eternal life.

So, it makes sense, since Jesus has made much of the time and the shortness of time for the coming kingdom now that He is on the scene, for the disciples to have questions about time and events and the end of the world, which would mean the entrance of the final, glorious kingdom.

They are like little children in the back seat of the car who have been told they are headed somewhere they will love. They are on a long drive to a much desired destination. You know these kids. They are probably yours! "Mom, are we there yet? Hey Dad, how much longer? When will we know if we are close?" And you know, if we who love Christ and the glory of God trust His word as we should, then we ought to share their enthusiasm for a look at what's coming. We should be right there with them asking, "Jesus, we want this, when will it happen?"

In this section of the gospel narrative that we've labeled "Chapter 13," Jesus gives His disciples, and us, a look at what's coming in the future He has urged them to prepare for. Jesus deals first, in verses 5-23, with the more immediate destruction of the Temple the moves on to events that will point to His return and the end of time as we have known it. We're going to look at the details of these sections, Lord willing, over the next few weeks, but for today I want you to see the practical, day to day teaching at the heart of this chapter for all believers of all time, however long it lasts.

That message can be summed up in one Greek word Jesus uses repeatedly: *blepo*. It is the word "to see." Jesus essentially responds to their questions by saying, "Remember what you wanted me to see (*blepo*) in the Temple? Here's what I want you to see (*blepo*) in the future." We're going to condense the details Jesus gives into three main concepts for us to see as we look with Jesus at what's coming.

Concept #1. As we look at what's coming we must see that the life of faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified and resurrected Savior, is no bed of roses. Suffering, hostility, opposition, apparent defeat, distress, disappointment, all of these the disciples of Jesus will encounter on their journey with Him to the eternal kingdom of the God of glory.

Jesus sets out for His disciples a look at what's coming for them and suffering is a normal, expected component of their personal and corporate future. Brothers and sisters, Joel Osteen and the prosperity preachers so sought after in our day have it wrong. No disciple is meant by Jesus to have a trouble-free life. We are meant to have fear-free lives!

Jesus said,

In this world you will have trouble; fear not! For I have overcome the world.

He does not deliver us from trouble and tribulation. He delivers us from fear, from fear of death, and from the hopelessness that flourishes like so many mushrooms in the fertilizer of fear.

Concept #2. As we look at what's coming we must see that God retains sovereign control over all He has created including the flow of human history. Dark times and distress will come, Jesus says, but the end is not yet. False messiahs, false hope, and false accusations will abound, but the end is not yet. Why is the end not yet? Because man is not in control, God is! "God is in heaven, and, while all is not right with the world, it soon will be. God has already determined both the course of history and its outcome and He assures the ultimate deliverance of those who faithfully follow Jesus.

God will bring all things to the end of His choosing, in His way, at His time. It is an outcome He has had in mind from eternity. Evil will not have the last word, not matter how many words evil tries to get in beforehand! We are not, then, to be afraid or disheartened by what God has ordained and Christ has revealed as we look at what's coming.

Concept #3. The final concept we must see as we look with Jesus at what's coming is the hope of His return and the suddenness of the end. Friends, when we live in the middle of an uproar of resistance and persecution, such as is surely coming, when we face difficulties and distress, we can't always discern how God's purposes are being accomplished in our circumstances or in the world around us. Sometimes, no matter how much we might want to, we just don't get it. We can't see God's immediate purpose. At times like those, we take comfort and gain strength by keeping our eyes on God's ultimate purpose.

It is really hard for me, right now, to figure out God's purpose in the circumstances He's led Cornerstone into, and the world into. But I have hope. I have hope because even though I can't see the immediate plan, I can still see the ultimate plan. I have hope because I know Jesus is coming. I have hope because I know He will gather His elect from among every tribe and tongue and nation and people. I have hope because I know He will judge faithfully between us and our detractors, between the sheep and the goats, between the church and the world. I have hope because I know sins are forgiven and that even when He judges the deeds we have done in the flesh, He will judge fairness, righteousness, wisdom, and love.

I have hope today because Jesus has given us a look at what's coming and His name is written all over it. The details aren't pretty. They weren't for Him and they won't be for us, but the big picture is glorious. And because we all who follow Jesus have such hope we must obey the repeated command in this chapter: "See to it." "Stay awake."

It is not our task to formulate a timetable of the End. It is our calling to concentrate on the task that IS ours: to watch, to see, to endure, and to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord by being ourselves filled with the knowledge of His glory and readily testifying to His glory in every circumstance and situation of life into which God sovereignly leads us for His glory.

Let's pray.

Praying this morning for Mike Crotteau and John Hay who will be leading the services next Sunday, and for our preparation we dig more deeply into chapter 13 and the look Jesus gives us into what's coming.