

Don't Let Your Guard Down

Mark 13:14-23, 28-31

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¹⁴ “But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, ¹⁶ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁷ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸ Pray that it may not happen in winter. ¹⁹ For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. ²⁰ And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. ²² For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.”

²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

My sermon title this morning is “Don't Let Your Guard Down”.

It is said that children can ask up to two to three hundred questions a day.

By contrast, an adult can ask only six to thirty questions a day.

One of the traits of a good disciple is that they ask questions of their teacher. A disciple means he or she is a learner.

As we walk through the Gospel of Mark, we see the early disciples of Jesus having many questions for him.

1. When Jesus taught his disciples the parable of the Sower, they asked him privately to explain the parable. (Mark 4:10)
2. When Jesus taught about what defiles a man using a parable, they asked him to explain the parable. (Mark 7:17)

3. When Jesus took some of his disciples to see his transfiguration, they asked about him about Elijah. (Mark 9:11).
4. When a father brought his son to the disciples to heal him of his demon possession, they were powerless. And after Jesus healed the boy, the disciples were curious and asked Jesus, “Why could we not cast it out?” (Mark 9:28). And we saw our Lord tell his disciples that they needed to pray.
5. When Jesus taught about divorce and marriage, the disciples asked our Lord again about this matter. (Mark 10:10).
6. Other people had questions for Jesus too. Some very honest and some very deceptive in their questions. The rich young man had an excellent question for Jesus “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17).

When we began our passage last week in Mark 13, called the Olivet discourse, the disciples ask our Lord about future events with a sense of urgency. Their question came after an observation from a disciple and a comment from our Lord. One of the disciples observed the magnificent buildings and stones of the temple in the first century. And then our Lord said that the temple will be destroyed and become rubble. That comment must’ve unsettled them.

In response, the disciples asked two questions – “Tell us, *when* will these things be, and *what* will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” Mark 13:4 They ask *when* will the temple be destroyed and *what* sign should they look for before the Temple is destroyed.

Last week, we walked through Jesus’ answer in response to the ‘what’ question. Jesus told his disciples that they should be vigilant because false prophets and false messiahs would come. Jesus told them that natural disasters would occur but do not be alarmed. And then he told his disciples to depend on the Holy Spirit to witness for his name. Jesus’ answer reveals to us the necessity of being alert and being dependent on the Holy Spirit *than* knowing exactly when certain events should happen. Jesus’ focus in his response is on *how* to live your life as a disciple than knowing exact details of the future.

We saw Jesus give at least *five* warnings or exhortations.

In verse 5, Jesus exhorted them, “*See that no one leads you astray*”.

In verse 7, Jesus warned, “*Do not be alarmed*”.

In verse 9, Jesus warned, “*Be on your guard*”.

In verse 11, Jesus encouraged them to “*do not be anxious*”.

And in verse 13, Jesus exhorted his disciples to endure.

Today, we’ll attempt to expound Jesus’ answer to ‘when will the temple fall’ question.

Verse 1.

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

Notice the first thing Jesus tells his disciples in verse 14 - “When you see”.

This is a play on words. One of the disciples said “Look at these great buildings”. (Mark 13:1). Jesus said to him “Do you see these buildings? (Mark 13:2).

Jesus tell them that when they see this “*abomination of desolation*” happen, what will follow is the Temple’s destruction and even Jerusalem.

What does Jesus mean by the phrase “abomination of desolation”?

It means a desecration, defilement or violation of the Temple.

- Matthew’s Gospel includes Jesus mentioning Daniel’ prophecy from Daniel 9:27

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), Matthew 24:15

- Luke’s Gospel is rather very plain on what this desolation looks like:

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Luke 21:20

Jesus predicts that the Temple will be desecrated and destroyed by Gentile armies.

This sort of desecration, abomination and destruction is not new to the Temple history.

1. When the first temple was still in place, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon surrounded it and destroyed the first temple. This was wasn’t a random destruction. It was planned and purposed by God. Why? Because the people of Israel had sinned by bring their abominations into the temple. Hear what Jeremiah the prophet said as he was directed by God.

“This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight ³² because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah that they did to provoke me to anger—their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ³³ They have turned to me their back and not their face. And though I have

taught them persistently, they have not listened to receive instruction. ³⁴ *They set up their abominations in the house that is called by my name, to defile it.* ³⁵ *They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.”* Jeremiah 32:31-35.

2. The prophet Ezekiel told the people of Israel that God would withdraw from his temple. *Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw.* Ezekiel 5: 11. In Ezekiel 10, we that the glory of the Lord had left the temple.
3. The prophet Daniel predicted that the temple would be desecrated after his time. In 168 B.C, Antiochus Epiphanes, the ruler of Syria desecrated the Temple by setting up an idol of Zeus and sacrificing a pig on the altar. The Jews saw this abomination as one fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. But Jesus here is not referring to the past. Jesus quotes Daniel (in Matthew’s Gospel) to predict a future desolation of the temple. When would that desolation happen?

Verse 30 gives us a timeline.

³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Within a generation. Forty years was one generation.

“*These things*” in verse 30 are the events that our Lord had predicted prior to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem - False prophets, wars or rumors, natural disasters, persecution for the disciples and the “abomination of desolation”.

And it is light of this future desolation, Jesus tells his disciples and his followers to leave Jerusalem.

Verses 14 through 18.

..then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, ¹⁶ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁷ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸ Pray that it may not happen in winter.

Jesus urges his disciples to flee for safety. He tells them to get away with urgency.

For illustration: Remember Sodom and Gomorrah? God told Lot to get away from the city because He was going to destroy Sodom. Don't look back. Don't worry about your stuff. Lot did get out. However, Lot's wife looked back and didn't make it. Jesus also says *pray*.

Lord willing, we will pick up verses 19 through 23 next Sunday along with the next passage. But let's look at verse 23 as we conclude.

²³ But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.”

Jesus exhorts - Look out. Watch out. Be on guard. Be alert for false teachers. When wars break out or disasters happen, do not be alarmed. Depend on the Holy Spirit to witness for Christ.

In conclusion, the Temple once stood for God's glory.

Did the glory of God return?

God's glory came back when Jesus came.

John's Gospel tells us John 1:14 – *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”*

John 1:14

The word 'dwelt' is tabernacle or temple language.

Jesus Christ is the radiance of the glory of the God.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Don't Let Your Guard Down. Mark 13:14-23

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What are the signs Jesus describes that will lead to the destruction of the Temple?
What implications and applications can we draw from these signs?
2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.
 - How does Jesus exhort his disciples and how do we apply these exhortations?
 - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

3. HANDS For personal reflection: What will you do to be alert?