

# 75 Mark 13:1-37

## Overview

### Text

13:1 And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” 2 And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”

### Overview

We now begin one of the most controversial passages in all of scripture. The thing that makes this so remarkable is how large a section this is. We are not talking about one verse that people differ on. We are talking about an entire chapter. Moreover, given that this chapter occurs in one of the synoptic Gospels, that means that it is repeated in Matthew and Luke as well. Hence this confusion spans three large chapters. Naturally, this is a text that we must approach with much humility. This morning, in the interest of fairness, I am going to give an overview of this passage from some different perspectives.

### Preterism

Preterism basically means "past." Thus the preterist is one who sees everything in this chapter as having already been fulfilled in the past. They will look at the context and note that it is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. In their mind, everything described in this chapter, when rightly understood, can refer to the events in the first century. There is no clear break in subject, they argue, and it is artificial to insert one. It all flows nicely from Jesus declaration of the destruction of the temple, to the disciples asking when it would happen, to Jesus explaining the signs and timing of it all.

Full preterism is not very well represented. There are very few full preterists today.

### Futurism

On the other end of the spectrum is the futurist. The futurist will say that everything is future, that is, nothing refers to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. This is the view of many

dispensationalists. It may be the view of all of them. I cannot keep up with all of its divisions and authors, but this is the view of classical dispensationalists like Ryrie and Chafer, modified like Walvood and Pentecost, Leakey like MacArthur, and progressive like Saucy. There are variations among these authors, but they all see these events as either exclusively tied to a yet future tribulation, or as leading up to and including the future tribulation.

Ryrie, for example, sees everything after verse 4 as future. In this scheme, Jesus predicts the fall of Jerusalem, the disciples ask him when this will happen, and Jesus' answer is all about a future temple that will some day be built and the destroyed. Ryrie states that the disciples asked three questions (See Mt) but Jesus only answered two of them. First he answers the question what are the signs of the end of the age in verses 4-28 of Matthew (5-23 in Mk). Verses 5-13 refer to the first half of the 7 yr tribulation, and verses 14-23 refer to the last half of the tribulation. Verses 24-30 refer to the second coming of Christ. Since this is such a popular view in evangelicalism, I will spend a short time giving the reasons why they so interpret this passage. For the sake of brevity I will only discuss Ryrie's position. If opportunity presents itself I may interact with other authors in the coming weeks as I do a more detailed exegesis.

I believe that this interpretation derives principally from Daniel 9. Let me read the relevant part to you:

“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. 25 Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. 26 And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. 27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

70 weeks are decreed. There are 7 and 62 weeks until Messiah the prince comes. That makes 69 weeks. Where is the last week? By the way, you should understand these weeks as weeks of years. Thus one week is seven years. 70 weeks is 490 years. I don't have time to demonstrate that for you so if you are interested you may study that on your own time. So from the going forth of the decree to rebuild there will be 7 weeks and 62 weeks until Messiah comes. There is one more week to be accounted for.

We read in verse 26 that after the 69th week the anointed one will be cut off. Then are decreed desolations. He shall make a covenant with the many for one week. There is our missing week. Three and a half years into this covenant he will put an end to sacrifices and then will come the desolation.

All of this is interpreted as follows: Jesus comes in 69 weeks of years and then he is cut off. Then there arises one who will make a covenant for 7 years. The first three and a half are relatively peaceful, but at the halfway mark this desolator will destroy the temple thus putting an end to sacrifices.

Now fast forward to 2 Thess 2:3-4

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

This lawless one is the desolator of Daniel 9. Finally, as we turn back to Mark, we see the abomination that causes desolation in verse 14. This is an obvious reference to Daniel 9. We know from 2 Thess that this lawless one will arise before Jesus returns for the final judgement. Working backward in Mark, we see the return of Jesus in verse 26, and in the verses prior to that we have the great tribulation. Verse 14 speaks of the abomination that causes desolation (this references Daniel 9) and the tribulation continues through vs 23. All of this is the last 3 and a half years of the last week of Daniel. Verses 4-13, therefore, must be the first three and a half years of relative peace.

So there you have it. Verses 5-13 are the first half of Daniel's week. Verses 14-23 are the last three and a half years when the sacrifices are ended through the destruction of the temple. Then Jesus returns in vs 24-27. And the rest of the chapter reiterates the warnings already given. That, in a nutshell is the dispensational scheme. Again, there are some variations to this among the different authors.

## Dual Prophecy

The final group of interpreters holds that Jesus speaks both of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, as well as the second coming. I am among this group. This is probably the majority report among evangelicals. There is a general consensus that Jesus starts off talking about the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and ends up talking about the second coming at the end of the chapter. That said, within this group, precious little is agreed upon besides the conviction that Jesus speaks of both events. The controversy has to do with where he transitions between the two. I must confess, this is not an easy knot to untie. In fact, this may be the Gordian knot of scripture. Some people take the position that this text is an example of prophetic foreshortening. Thus William Hendriksen states:

The prophetic material found in this sixth discourse has reference not only to events near at hand (see, for example, verse 16) but also to those stretching far into the future, as is clear from 24:14, 29-31....By the process of prophetic foreshortening, by means of which before one's eyes the widely separated mountain peaks of historic events merge and are seen as one...two momentous events are here intertwined, namely, a. the judgment upon Jerusalem (its fall in the year A.D. 70), and b. the final judgment at the close of world's history.

As Hendriksen states, the prophecy appears to be talking about just one event even though it is two. Like the ranges of a mountain seem like they are stacked close together, when you actually arrive at the first peak you discover that the next range is actually very far away. This view is certainly preferable to the liberal view which states that Jesus really thought all these things would happen within one generation, but he was wrong.

The prophetic foreshortening view has many adherents, but seems to lack clear indications as to when Jesus is speaking of which event. Don Carson, on the other hand, suggests a tighter presentation. He sees a couple of inclusions that provide the interpretive structure to this chapter

(although in fairness he is commenting on Mathew 24 specifically).

The final view takes the majority of this discourse (from verse 5 through 30) to refer to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the remainder of the chapter speaks of the second coming. This view is a minority within the majority dual prophecy view. I'm not sure where that puts it over all. This view is gaining in popularity in Reformed circles and is represented by the likes of Bahnsen, France, Wright, Gentry, Sproul and Mathison. It is this final view that I am going to present and defend in the coming weeks.

## **Application**

This is not a view to which I am absolutely committed, I am willing to be persuaded otherwise. And there is no safe place to stand on this issue. No matter where you fall you will find yourself at odds with some powerful minds.

So as we study this passage, we need to keep in mind that Christ is central. No matter where you fall on the interpretive grid, we should agree that Jesus is the center of it all. Therefore our affections for him should be stirred as we study.

Moreover, Jesus' approach in this section is largely pastoral. Look at all the times he warns his disciples. He warns against too eager of date setting. He warns against false teachers. He warns of persecutions. Jesus cares about his followers and he desires their perseverance. Jesus loves his disciples and he wants them to be prepared. He does not want them caught unaware. No matter where you fall on your interpretation, we can see the heart of Jesus for his followers and we can make application to ourselves along the way.

We have a high priest who is able to sympathize with us. Dear friends, Jesus knows what is coming and he is in charge. He is the Good Shepherd and he will not let his sheep down. Trust in him, lean into him during times of tribulation. Get to know him more intimately so that when difficulties come you will rest on your faith rather than question your faith.