

76 Mark 13:1-13

The Background and Pronouncement

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?” 5 And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. 7 And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

9 “But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. 10 And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. 11 And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Background

One of the drawbacks of doing systematic theology apart from biblical theology is that it does not pay enough attention to context. Topical studies are difficult to do. Whether it is topical preaching or systematic theology, it is exceedingly hard to do right. Because it is so hard to do right, very few people actually do it correctly.

To understand a verse well you must know its context. You must know what genre it is pulled from. You should be aware of how the author has structured his book and where this verse fits into the overall structure. If you read about the healing of the blind man in two stages and you don't recognize the structure, then you may be tempted to conclude that Jesus was running low on his miracle juice. You should know the style of an author and how he employs it. Mark uses the term “immediately” as a way to move his story along. It is part of what gives Mark the feel of

being so fast paced. There is no time delay; everything is “immediately.” When we see it is a style thing for Mark that may temper our desire to see these events as actually having happened in a split second. Thus for each verse that you want to draw upon for your systematic theology you should spend the needed time in the book.

For a world obsessed with end-times, it is even more important that we understand the context of such a heavily disputed passage. This Passion Week has been very full. Ever since Jesus made his triumphal entry things have been tense to say the least. The conflict that has existed through his ministry now come to a head in Jerusalem.

Mark

Jesus curses the fig tree in chapter 10, which symbolized Israel. He then cleanses the temple and quotes from Isa ch 56 immediately before Isaiah blasts the leaders of Israel as blind guides and worse. The second half of the quotation is from Jer 7 in the midst of threats of destruction on Jerusalem and the temple. The prophet is berating Israel for thinking they can reject God and still remain safe in their temple. Jeremiah points them to Shiloh, God's former dwelling, which he destroyed on account of their wickedness.

After this is the first confrontation where Jesus silences his opponents when they question his authority. He then tells a parable against them. In the parable the leaders of Israel are clearly the wicked tenants. The prophets are the servants and Jesus is the son. Destruction is declared to be the just end for these wicked tenants. There are several more confrontations that end with Jesus posing the question of David's son being his Lord. In that Jesus quotes from Psalm 110 where this conquering king will rule until he has put his enemies under his feet.

Matthew

Matthew records this climaxing battle in a different way. He tells the parable of the marriage feast where those whom the king invited refused to come to the wedding of his son and some of them mistreated the king's servants "And the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murders and set their city on fire." The in ch 23 comes the pronouncement of the seven woes. the form of seven pronouncements of woes. The final woe is as follows:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, 30 saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31 Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? 34 Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town,35 so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

This filling up, or this completion of the guilt will come upon this generation as they continue to stone and kill the prophets and apostles of Christ. Chapter 23 ends with this lament:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! 38 See, your house is left to you desolate.

Luke

While Matthew records a lament of Jesus as he was leaving Jerusalem, Luke records another lament as Jesus made his triumphal entry:

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

So even before he enters, Jesus knows where all of this is leading. He knows that it will end in his death and in the decimation of Jerusalem. Luke then records many of the same confrontations that Mark included.

I mentioned in passing last week Jesus' departing the temple and coming to sit upon the mount of Olives. In Ezekiel 9, the glory of the Lord begins a journey out of Jerusalem. It continues through chapters 10 and 11. The dramatic exodus of the glory of God culminates when it comes to rest upon the mount of olives.

The glory of God moves in chapter 9 and declares the slaughter of all who are in Jerusalem. Ezekiel, in horror, asks if God will destroy all the remnant of Israel. God basically replies that they have brought this upon themselves. God commands the angel to take burning coals and spread them over the city; and the glory of God moved from the threshold to the east gate. The visions of slaughter continue into ch 11 when Ezekiel again cries out, "Ah, Lord God! Will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" This time in response to Ezekiel, God talks about how he will gather his people from all the nations and he will remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. After that brief glimpse of hope, the glory of God departs from the east gate and comes to rest upon the mount of Olives. Chapter 12 continues with prophecies of the sacking of Jerusalem.

All three synoptic writers record an escalation of confrontation. Judgment and destruction and a filling up of guilt are thematic undercurrents and allusions as well as explicit statements that attend the entire passion week. Ichabod! The glory has departed! Repeating that dramatic movement of the glory of God, Jesus declares that the temple is being left desolate and takes his place on the mount of Olives and gives a more detailed prophecy of destruction. With all of these streams flowing together, you don't get a stronger literary culmination than this. This is the perfect storm.

The Prediction

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."

As they leave the temple complex, the disciples, completely ignorant of the significance of this movement, remark on the temple. It was truly a magnificent site! I have given the description earlier in sermon number 65 and I will not repeat it now. You may reference that earlier sermon and look at the images of the temple I posted on the website.

The disciples were right to be in awe of such magnificent architecture. But their admiration meets an abrupt end. Jesus seems remarkably unimpressed and instead issues an explicit prophecy of its demise. As the One who left the heavenly realm, of which the temple was only a dim copy, and who sees with spiritual eyes the decay within its walls, that structure is a stench that will soon be removed. Perhaps motioning to the great buildings, Jesus says, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." This temple and all it represents will come crashing down.

Let me make one quick interpretive statement: On what we have thus far, there is no way that what follows is about some future temple. This pronouncement is the culmination of all the conflicts and woes and OT allusions to destruction. Jesus said in Matthew 23 that the guilt will be filled in this generation. The disciples awe was regarding the buildings right in front of their eyes, not a future non-existent building. Jesus springboards off their observations and says, "Do you *see* all *these* things?" His disciples then ask, "when will these things be?" We cannot contextually make the ensuing discussion about some other temple over 2000 years into the future.

Application

James Edwards comments, "Like a system of cells that has become malignant, the temple has forsaken its intended purpose and must be eradicated." (Edwards, 388). Ladies and gentleman, does this description not strike fear into your hearts? What if I rephrase it this way, "Like a system of cells that has become malignant, the church has forsaken its intended purpose and must be eradicated?" I am not speaking of the church as a whole, for we have the assurance of God that it will remain. But of the individual local bodies, have they forsaken their intended purpose? I think that we would not hesitate to say that that many of them have indeed forsaken their intended purpose.

I really don't know if this effects you much at the moment, but I pray it does. In the coming weeks we are going to see the horrors that came from the rebellion of the leaders of Israel. As we do that I hope you will understand that God plays for keeps. He is deadly serious. And dear friends, we need to be blood earnest about following him.