

Commentary on Mark chapter 13, by Chuck Smith 3.27.22

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March memory verse John 16:33 (NKJV) These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

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And as he [Jesus] went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! ([Mar 13:1](#))

Referring to the great temple in Jerusalem that was rebuilt by Herod the Great. It became one of the wonders of the ancient world. It took over fifty years to construct. Herod the Great was never able to complete it himself. Herod the Great, as we have mentioned before, was fond of using great stones in his building projects. But according to Josephus, some of the greatest stones that he used in his building projects were used in the temple itself. Josephus records that some of the stones were forty-seven feet long, eight feet high and twelve feet thick.

Now that seemed preposterous and just totally unreal, until recent archaeological excavations that have been going on along the Western Wall down at the southwest corner of the Western Wall, they have found these tremendous cornerstones that are about thirty-five feet long, about six feet high and eight feet thick. But then, as they were excavating along the Western Wall towards the fortress of Antonio, they've come across a huge stone; it's about forty-five feet long. I stood beside the thing. It's about ten feet thick and about eight feet tall. Almost as large as some of those that he used in the temple building itself. They estimate that these stones weigh up to four hundred tons. They still marvel at how they were able to hew out these stones, carve them so perfectly smooth, and then move them in place. How they actually got them into place is still a mystery; it is a matter of speculation. But they're not really certain how in the world they could ever move such large stones and get them in place in a building. These stones are so perfectly hewn out that they did not need mortar between them; they just lie flat one on another. And even to the present day, with all of the erosion, you take a knife blade and you try to insert it between the stones, and they're so perfectly carved you can't push a knife blade in. The dome of the building was then covered with sheets of gold. So that in looking at the building, it reflected that sun and you couldn't really look at it if you were in that angle where the sun would reflect and hit your eyes. Brilliant building. One of the marvels of the ancient world.

So, as the disciples were coming out of the temple, they were noting these huge stones and this marvelous building that was constructed by Herod. At this point, having begun some twenty years before the birth of Christ, and Christ now being around thirty-three

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years old, take off the four years that they feel is an error in the calendar, and you get about forty-seven years in construction at this point. So, the building was pretty well completed. It only took another eighteen years to finish it.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down ([Mar 13:2](#)).

Now, I imagine that that particular prediction seemed rather preposterous to the disciples. However, some forty years later, when Titus came in and conquered Jerusalem, once they were able to enter the city, the last citadel, the strongest fortress was the temple itself, the strongest building in the city. And so many of the Jews fled to the temple in order to hold off the Roman legion from within the temple. Titus ordered that they just not destroy the temple, but to leave it intact. However, some of the Roman soldiers, drunken, began to fire arrows at the temple, flaming arrows. And the temple caught fire and the Jews inside were cremated. But the intense heat of the fire melted the gold of the dome. And it, being melted, came on down and filled the cracks of the stones. And so then the Roman troops, in order to loot the gold, took the temple down stone upon stone, until the prophesy of Jesus was literally fulfilled. Not one stone was left standing upon another.

As you go to Jerusalem today and you look down into the excavations in the Teropian Valley, you can see one area where they have dug all the way down to the Roman road that was there at the time of Christ. And there, on that Roman road at the time of Christ, you can see huge stones lying just as they were, broken as they were pushed over from the Temple Mount, probably some of the temple stones that were pushed over and filled the Teropian Valley. And you see them lying just as they fell. Mute testimony to the accuracy of the prediction of Jesus Christ. Or exactly as He said, "Not one stone was left standing upon another."

Now, it should be noted that He made that prediction of the Herodian temple. They do feel that there are probably foundation stones of Solomon's temple are still existing somewhere on the Temple Mount. And right now, there is a tremendous move to seek to find the foundation of Solomon's temple. Stanford Research Institute has been hired to use radar-type devices to probe under the surface of the Temple Mount, and to make a model showing the tunnels and the foundation stones. And they're able to distinguish these things with this new type of testing units, and they are hoping to discover the foundation stones of Solomon's temple. And if they do, then there will be a gigantic push to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. There's already a gigantic push under way by many Jews. I receive interesting, fascinating mail from Samuel Goldfoot, who is the head of the Temple Mount Foundation. This man and his group have dedicated their lives to the rebuilding of the temple, which, of course, is extremely exciting from a biblical prophetic standpoint.

And as he sat [down] upon the mount of Olives ([Mar 13:3](#)),

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So, they left the Temple Mount area, crossed through the Kidron Valley and over towards Bethany. Probably going up the Mount of Olives; it is a pretty steep mountain going up, and it isn't a bad idea to stop and rest halfway up or more. And so He went over with His disciples to the Mount of Olives and He sat down.

Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? ([Mar 13:3-4](#))

That is, the destruction of the temple.

and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? ([Mar 13:4](#))

Or, the completion of prophecy.

And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you ([Mar 13:5](#)):

The first thing that Jesus warned against were deceivers. It is interesting how that all the way through the New Testament the church was warned of deceivers, warned of false prophets. That has been the curse of the church: men who have sought to profit off of the gospel of Jesus Christ, sought personal profiting, gain. There are so many charlatans, wolves in sheep's clothing. And Jesus warns them against those deceivers.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ [the Messiah]; and shall deceive many ([Mar 13:6](#)).

And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ([Mar 13:7-8](#)):

This from the Greek is speaking of a worldwide state of war; it's just something different from the wars and rumors of wars that have been going on the whole while. A world war!

earthquakes in divers [different] places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that [will] speak, but the Holy Ghost [Spirit] ([Mar 13:8-11](#)).

So, this prophecy of Jesus was surely fulfilled. And in the book of Acts we read how that they were brought before the magistrates, how they were beaten, how they were

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brought before the councils, before the rulers. And Paul the apostle even stood before King Agrippa, and later, before Nero himself. But Jesus said, "Don't worry about what you're going to say." And we find an interesting story in the book of Acts how that Stephen was brought before the council and how he began to rehearse to them their history. And how that as he was speaking, his face began to shine like an angel's, as the anointing of God's Spirit rested upon Stephen. And yet, the people were so incensed by the things that he was saying, that finally, they gnashed upon him with their teeth and drug him out and stoned him to death.

Now, a lot of people wonder about this particular prophecy, "The gospel must first be published among all nations." And there are many mission groups that take this as more or less the impetus for their mission program. And they claim that we can hasten the return of Jesus Christ by advancing the missionary program, for the gospel must be preached unto all nations before the end comes.

Paul the apostle, when he was writing to the Colossian church, some thirty years after the death of Christ, said to the church in his letter, "And the gospel which has come to you as it is into all the world." Paul claimed that by the time he had written that letter to the Colossian church the gospel had gone into all the world. There are churches in India today that trace their origin back to the disciple Thomas. According to tradition, Thomas went to India and preached the gospel. And there is in India today, the Church of Thomas, one of the largest churches in India Christian works is the Church of Thomas. And they trace their roots back to Thomas himself.

The gospel was spread by the early church, filling the earth. Really, their endeavors are a real testimony against us today. For they did not have the modern methods that are available to us. When I read of Paul's journeys and how this guy traveled with the gospel of Jesus Christ, I wonder what he would have done in the jet age. You know, with radio and TV and jets and all. Man! That guy would have been unstoppable! Because he had to walk and take boats and so forth and all. And yet, the territory that that fellow covered. What a witness against us.

Now, not only did Paul say that the gospel was preached into all the world by the time he had written to the Colossians, but in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Revelation, John, in verse 6, said, "I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people." So during the last days, in the Tribulation period, God is going to be using angels flying through the midst of heaven to declare the everlasting gospel. To every nation, language, tribe, people. So that it is not a prerequisite to the coming of Jesus for His church to get the gospel preached into all of the world. You cannot say, "Well, the Lord can't rapture the church tonight because the gospel hasn't yet been preached in all the world. And Jesus said it's got to be preached into all the world before the end comes." That's not a valid argument. Because the gospel will be preached and this prophecy of Christ will be fulfilled, but not necessarily by the church.

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And Jesus didn't say that they were going to have to proclaim the gospel, He just said it would be proclaimed among all nations.

Now, some people see the angel flying through the midst of heaven as one of these Communication Satellites. And who knows? When John saw this thing flying through the midst of heaven, and preaching to everyone all over the world, who knows? But John thought it was an angel, when in the vision, he saw this thing going and the voice was coming to all men with the gospel. We're in negotiations and have been talking to men about putting The Word For Today on a satellite radio communicator. And it can be beamed up to it and can be picked up all over the world. In fact, they're talking about little receiver sets that they can make to operate on solar energy. So that, for just a few dollars, they can make these little receivers that will be tuned only to that particular satellite. And the natives anywhere in the world can set out the little radios and, catching the energy of the sun, can listen to the broadcast

Jesus said, Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains ([Mar 13:12-14](#)):

Now, Jesus is pleading for understanding of this. In the book of Daniel, chapter 9, he refers to the "abomination of desolation." According to my understanding in putting a composite together using Revelation chapter 13 ([Rev 13](#)), 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 ([2Th 2](#)) and Daniel chapters 9 ([Dan 9](#)) and 12 ([Dan 12](#)), as I see and understand the "abomination of desolation," according to the scriptures the Jews are going to rebuild their temple. It would seem that the treaties and arrangements for the rebuilding of the temple will be accomplished through a very powerful, wise, astute leader that is going to arise to lead the European community. And that he will make a covenant ([Daniel 9](#)) with the nation Israel. But after three and a half years, he will break that covenant and he will set up the abomination which causes desolation. In the twelfth chapter of the book of Daniel it says he will cause the daily prayers and oblations to cease; he'll stop the sacrifices that the Jews have re-instituted.

According to Paul in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 ([2Th 2](#)), he is going to come to the temple of God and show that he himself is God and demand to be worshipped as God. And he will show all kinds of miracles and signs and wonders, so that, if possible, he will deceive even the elect.

According to the thirteenth chapter of the book of Revelation, he will cause an image to be made of himself. And this image will be placed within the temple and people will be required to worship this image. And he has power to put to death those that would refuse to worship the image. So Jesus said, "Let him who reads understands." When you see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not, that is the

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abomination which causes desolation. This is the thing that will cause the desolation or the destruction of the Great Tribulation period, the last three and a half years. The whole sequence of this wrath of God being poured out upon man will be triggered by this ultimate blasphemy; as this man of sin, the son of perdition, stands in the Holy of Holies of the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and there blasphemes the God of heaven and declares that he is God and demands to be worshipped as God. That is the final straw of man's rebellion against God. And God will begin His move to judge the world in order that He might establish His new kingdom, the kingdom of righteousness, joy, and peace. This will be the trigger that will usher in the three and a half years of the great tribulation period. So, Jesus makes reference to it: "When you see this 'abomination of desolation' that is spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not, let him that reads understand, then let them that are in Judea..." Notice He's speaking not of the United States; He's not speaking of the church. "...those that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains."

And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck [are nursing] in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days [there] shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be ([Mar 13:15-19](#)).

This is the time of the greatest tribulation the world will ever know in its history, even worse than the flood of Noah's day. Even worse than the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Never has the world seen anything to equal what is going to transpire during this three and a half year period.

Today, with the strong anti-nuclear movement, all kinds of horrible scenarios are being imagined. The problem is, these scenarios are all possible with the weapons that we have today. Surely a worldwide war with the use of nuclear weapons could bring to pass the whole scenario as is pointed out for us in the book of Revelation, this tremendous devastation. However, this destruction and tribulation that is coming will not necessarily result from man's devices, but is coming as a direct judgment of God upon the earth. And God will be involved in the judgment that is going to fall.

Now those Jews that are in Jerusalem at the time of this abomination of desolation are warned by Jesus to flee to the mountains and also, in another gospel, flee to the wilderness. In the book of Revelation, chapter 12, John talks about the woman, the nation Israel. And he said, "And she was given wings of an eagle to bear her to the wilderness to a place that has been prepared for her where she will be nourished for three and a half years." So during the time of the Great Tribulation, those Jews that heed the warning of Jesus in Judea will flee to the wilderness area that God has prepared for them, where God will provide and take care of them for that three and a half year period of the Great Tribulation.

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In Isaiah, the sixteenth chapter, God speaks unto Moab, or modern day Jordan, "Open up your gates and receive my people. Bear them safely to Petra, where they might be sheltered until the Great Tribulation period is over." And so, again putting a composite together, using the prophecies of Isaiah out of the Old Testament, the prophecies of the New Testament, the book of Revelation, here in the gospel, it would appear that when this abomination of desolation takes place, the Jews who up until that point many of them have acclaimed this man who helped them rebuild their temple, they've acclaimed him as the Messiah, suddenly their eyes will be open and the deception will be over, and they will realize, "This fellow deceived us." And hopefully, they will turn to the scriptures and they will obey the warning of Jesus and they will flee to the rock city of Petra. Now, according to the book of Revelation, the anti-Christ will send down an army after them, but the earth will open up and swallow the army that he sends after them. And God said that He will keep them safe there in Petra until this indignation, or the Great Tribulation period is over. And Jesus said to them, "Pray that your flight will not be in winter." In Matthew's gospel He adds, "...nor on the Sabbath day."

And it will be difficult for those women who are pregnant, or those who are nursing. "Woe unto them." Why? Because they are going to have to flee. It's going to be hard; it's going to be a real hardship. And to have small children with you will actually restrict your flight, and it will be difficult. So, it's just a woe to those because of the difficulties that they are going to experience during this period. For in those days shall be affliction, such as never been in the history of man.

And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake [Israel], [those] whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days ([Mar 13:20](#)).

The Lord speaks here of a period in man's history when, unless the Lord would shorten the days, man would have the capacity of destroying himself. No flesh would remain. But God, "for the elect's sake, those who He has chosen, will shorten those days."

And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect ([Mar 13:21-22](#)).

So signs and wonders are not always from God. Many times they can be to seduce a person after a false prophet.

But take ye heed: [He said,] behold, I have foretold you all things. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light ([Mar 13:23-24](#)),

Here He is referring to that same day that Joel prophesied in chapter 3, Peter quotes in Acts chapter 2, and we read about it in the book of Revelation under the sixth seal. "The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light."

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And the stars of heaven shall fall [a meteorite shower], and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory ([Mar 13:25-26](#)).

Oh, glorious day! After the tremendous holocaust, when the world is almost destroyed. The glorious return of Jesus Christ coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

And then shall he send his angels, and [they] shall gather together his elect [the Jews, actually] from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of the heaven ([Mar 13:27](#)).

This, of course, is a reference to the prophecies there in Isaiah.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh [near], even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away ([Mar 13:28-31](#)).

In the Old Testament, in parables the fig tree was a reference to the nation of Israel. In Jeremiah, the twenty-third chapter, God likens the nation of Israel to a basket of rotten figs that are so rotten that they have no value, only to be thrown away and destroyed, chapter twenty-four of the book of Jeremiah. And then over in [Hosea 9:10](#), God makes again a reference to the nation of Israel as a fig tree, where the Lord declares, "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time." And then in [Joel 1:7](#), God, in crying out against the destruction that had taken place of the nation, He said, "He hath laid my vine waste and barked my fig tree." So Israel was likened unto a vine in the parables, but also likened unto a fig tree. "So that when you see the branches yet tender and beginning to put forth leaves, you know that summer is near, even know that My coming is near, even at the doors."

Now Jesus declares how His word is going to stand, "Heaven and earth will pass..." The Bible tells how that the heavens are going to be folded up and the earth is going to melt with a fervent heat. "But My words," He said, "shall not pass away." The eternal word of God.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father ([Mar 13:32](#)).

Jesus, as we said, when He came to the earth took upon Himself limitations, deliberately took upon Himself limitations. He was God manifested in the flesh. But by virtue of coming in a body of flesh, while He was in the body of flesh He could not be omnipresent. He was restricted as is a body of flesh to locality. And there were other restrictions that He took while in a body. And there was a restriction in actually the knowledge of the day that He would return. He said, "I don't even know that, no man

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knows it. Only the Father." Now that He is glorified again with the Father, He no doubt knows it. But while in the restrictions of the body, that was a part of the restriction while existing here on the earth in a body.

It is sheer folly and presumption for any man to pretend that he has some divine revelation or some insight into the scripture where he knows the day and the hour that the Lord is coming. Even though the Lord is so specific in this area, there are always those speculators who seem to be able to gather some kind of a following after them because they've set out on some system of interpreting of the scriptures whereby they feel that they have interpreted the very day for the return of Jesus Christ.

[Just] take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is ([Mar 13:33](#)).

Because the Lord can be coming for us at any time, the best advice is just, "Watch and pray. Be ready! Take heed, be ready! You don't know when it's going to happen."

For the Son of man is as a man [who is] taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his [apportioned] work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore [he said,]: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even [evening], or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch ([Mar 13:34-37](#)).

So, what Jesus is saying to you is: watch, be ready. You don't know exactly when He is coming. He may come at evening, He may come at midnight, He may come in the early morning. Because you don't know, just be watching and be ready.