

# Discussion Guide

WEEK OF 09.29.24

Series: Gospel of Mark

Text: Mark 13:1-23

**How to use this guide:** This discussion guide is designed to help you facilitate a conversation around the Bible text. Begin your discussion with prayer. Then, read this week's passage. Next, work through some of the questions together. The goal is not to ask every question, but to have a good, free-flowing discussion. Do your best to ask at least one question from each section (introduction, understanding, and application), but beyond that, let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation. Also, if you heard some point from the sermon that you'd like to discuss, feel free to add that to your group's discussion.

## QUESTIONS FOR INTRODUCTION

1. When thinking about the future, do you feel anxious, hopeful, uncertain, insecure, or secure? Why?
2. Describe a time you might have been tempted to worry about an event or situation in your life but found peace and assurance instead because of your relationship with Jesus.

Read Mark 13:1-23.

## QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

3. What are some events Jesus described that might have caused His disciples anxiety?
4. Why do you think Jesus didn't answer Peter, James, John, and Andrew's question about when the destruction of the temple would take place? From Jesus' answer in verses 5-6, what was His primary concern for the disciples?
5. What are some ways Christians are led astray when thinking about the future and end times? Why is this dangerous?
6. Jesus gives the disciples commands to use to prepare for the coming turbulent times. List them.
7. Given the present-day events, where do you think we are in God's plan?
8. Jesus says in v. 23, "So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time." Are you prepared? Are you keeping watch? Are you strengthening your relationship with the Lord? If not, what do you need to do to be prepared?
9. How would you counsel someone who has fears about the end times?
10. What courage and comfort do you draw from the Holy Spirit's role?

## QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

11. If you had less than a week to live, what would you want to be sure those close to you understood?
12. Including your previous answer, take 5 to 10 minutes to write or outline what you would want someone to say about you after you are gone.

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## COMMENTARY

### Mark 13:1-23

Jesus' teaching on the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem and the coming of the Son of man in Mark 13 are difficult to untangle. Despite this difficulty, two primary pastoral emphases are clear in the warnings to beware of deception and to be prepared for Christ's return. The disciples' amazement at the temple complex demonstrated they did not appreciate the prophetic acts of 11:12-21 and prepared for Jesus' prediction of the utter destruction of Jerusalem's temple. Notable among events preceding the destruction of the temple is the appearance of messianic pretenders. Believers are warned not to be taken in by such pretenders or to mistake "the beginning of the birth pains" for God's judgment on Jerusalem.

Acts and Paul's letters witness that the events related to the early Christian community in 13:9-13 were fulfilled before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Paul, for example, was beaten in synagogues five times (2 Cor. 11:24), testified before governors (Acts 18:12-13; 24:1-2; 25:7-8) and kings (Acts 9:15; 26:1-2). And he was accused of spreading the gospel throughout the known world (Acts 17:6; see Rom. 15:19). Peter and others bore Spirit inspired witness (Acts 4:8-22)

The events of 13:14-23 concern the Roman campaign against Judea. "Never to be equaled again" in verse 19 suggests an event within human history rather than its conclusion. The "abomination that causes desolation" refers to the defiling of the temple. As before, Jesus cautioned believers about false messiahs and false prophets. In the midst of judgment, God "has shortened" the days of war for the sake of believers ("the elect").

The events surrounding the coming of Christ belong to a time after the destruction of Jerusalem. The coming of Christ in power and glory (see 9:1) is an event whose cosmic repercussions echo Old Testament descriptions of the coming of God for judgment (for example, Isa. 13:10; 34:4). Jesus here emphasized His coming to save the elect.

**13:1-23.** Last Things, Great Tribulation. The phrase "abomination that causes desolation" comes verbatim from Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. *Abomination* is a term that described sacrilege, such as the profaning of a holy place. Many believe Daniel's prophecy had immediate reference to the unclean sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple commanded by Antichus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. The word of Jesus had additional reference to the sacking of the Temple by the Romans in AD 70. (Compare with Lk. 21:20). This had been the point of a direct statement by Jesus in 13:2. Amillennialists interpret the phrase in terms of past history and do not apply it to the future. premillennialists often interpret the abomination that causes desolation as a reference to the time of the antichrist immediately before Christ returns (13:14-27). Many see this complex set of ongoing interpretations as an illustration of the fulfillment of many biblical prophecies.

**13:1.** Jesus was having quite the busy week in Jerusalem, as it was His last. Much of Jesus' final week was spent in the temple complex. Herod, Rome's puppet king, had begun a "remodel" of the temple about 20 BC, a project not completed until AD 64. It was destroyed by the occupying Romans in 70 A.D. in response to a Jewish uprising. In Mark 13, sometimes called "The Little Apocalypse," Jesus spoiled that surprise and connected it to a future, and bigger, surprise.

In commenting on the massive stones of the temple (many of which were comparable in weight to a large jet), the disciples were likely anticipating a messianic takeover of the temple. They were relishing a life of power and prestige ahead, still not realizing the nature of Christ's kingdom.

**13:3.** On Thursday evening's walk from the Last Supper in the upper room to the Garden, Jesus taught more about the Holy Spirit's role. As Comforter, He comes alongside believers to help them continue to work while they wait. As Counselor, He helps them bear effective witness. Counselor has the sense here of an advocate, like a defense attorney.

**13:5.** You can imagine that the disciples were feeling a little overwhelmed by Jesus' answer to their two questions. Finally, after answering the "what?" part of the disciples' questions in dark detail, Jesus turned to "when?" However, He did not give a specific time, only signs that the time is coming. Jesus' main concern wasn't that the disciples would know when He would return, only that they would believe He would return and, in the meantime, live as those who trust that He is in control.

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