

Are We There Yet?

(Mark 13:3-13)

(preached 10/25/15; Sunday AM)

Introduction

There is no doubt about the favorite question of kids who are riding in the backseat of a car...

If they ask once, they ask a 1000 times....

“Are we there yet?”

Our own John Andrew who just turned 3 has already mastered the idea even before he has mastered the exact question...

“Here yet?” are his favorite two words as we ride in the car...

And we know they are his favorite two words because we here them over and over...

I assume the question comes out of the anticipation of arriving in new surroundings...

Of leaving what is familiar and going to a new place...

For parents on long road trips, I don't think we re quite as excited to arrive..

Arriving for us means unloading the car and unpacking the suitcases...

Our favorite question is...

“Are we here already?!”

If you look at the history of the world, there has always been a fascination of when the world as we know it will end?

Even among those who aren't Christians, there seems to be an assumption that things will not go on forever upon this earth...

And that has led to all sorts of emotions in people..

From fear...to gratitude...to anxiety...to joy....

And that has also led to all sorts of bad teaching about the end of the world as well...

IF you look at the worldwide church, you will find as many opinions about the end of the world as you find different churches...

For the next few weeks on Sunday morning, we are going to be examine Jesus' words about the end of the world...

And I can think of no better one to explain the end of all things than the one who holds the end in his hands...

For all the disagreement that exists over the end and all the complex and hard to follow explanations of the end...

I think you will find Jesus' words very clear and helpful..

And I think we are all going to learn a lot about what the end of the world will be like in a lot more detail than what you might expect...

What I want to do is to read this entire section together...

I am not going to preach it all today, but I think it is important that we listen to all that Jesus says in Mark 13 because this was one continuous teaching...

So, let me read this whole chapter to get us started this morning...

13 As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples *said to Him, "Teacher, behold [a]what wonderful stones and [b]what wonderful buildings!" 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see

these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”

3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and [c]James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately,

4 “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the [d]sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”

5 And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. 6 Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He!’ and will mislead many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. 8 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

9 “But [e]be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the [f]courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.

10 The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 When they [g]arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.

12 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and [h]have them put to death. 13 You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

14 “But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 15 The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; 16 and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. 17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 But pray that it may not happen in the winter. 19 For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. 20 Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no [i]life would have been saved; but for the sake of the [j]elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. 21 And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is [k]the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, He is there’; do not believe him; 22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show [l]signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. 24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in [m]the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His [n]elect

from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

28 “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.

29 Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, [o]recognize that [p]He is near, right at the [q]door. 30 Truly I say to you, this [r]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. 32 But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

33 “Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time [s]will come. 34 It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and [t]putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. 35 Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the [u]master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”

Let me pray for us...

Today, we are only going to look at verses 3-13 of chapter 13....

I have entitled this section of chapter 13....

“Are We There Yet?”.....

Because that is the question that the disciples asked that led to Jesus giving this long teaching about the end of the world...

Now, let me be clear here...

There are various ways to interpret Mark 13.

#1 - All of the predictions that Jesus made in Mark 13 have already come to pass.

#2 - Some of the predictions that Jesus made in Mark 13 have come to pass and others are still future.

#3 - All of the predictions that Jesus made in Mark 13 are still future.

And to be perfectly honest, one of the differences between church denominations is often their view of what Jesus teaches here...

A number of denominations hold view #1....

And other denominations hold views 2 and 3...

Personally, I hold view #3...

And personally I could go to a church that held view #2...

I would least likely go to a church that held view #1, but this is not a test of salvation.

There are many brothers and sisters in the Lord who we will meet in heaven who have view #1...

And I have good friends today who have view #1 who love and teach the Bible, and who I would support in ministry...

Now, with that being said...

Don't think for a second that this isn't an important section of Scripture...

It is really important...

I mean, how important do you consider the end of the world to be?

There is a growing attitude in the church today that the end really doesn't matter..

That God is going to work all things out, and we can simply believe what we want and be fine...

And though there is an element of truth in that attitude, I disagree completely...

If the end isn't that important, why is the Bible full of descriptions about how the end of time?

If the end isn't that important, why would Jesus take the time to teach about it to his disciples?

If you think about it in the book of Mark, Jesus is going to teach about this at the very end of his ministry...

This is Wednesday, and he is about to die on Friday...

If the end wasn't that important, why wouldn't Jesus spend this teaching time more wisely..

If there were more important things to know, isn't now the time to be teaching the disciples about them?

Jesus is going to be crucified in two days...

His ministry on earth is about to end.

If there is some last minute important instructions to give to the disciples, now is the time.

And I would suggest to you this morning, that what we see in Mark 13 is extremely important teaching..

How all things end is very important and Jesus is about to teach the disciples about it.

In fact, this is the longest teaching section on any one topic in all the gospels...

The normal amount of teaching material is 1 to 5 to 10 verses, but here Jesus spends 27 verses teaching his disciples about the end of all things...

Please don't fall into the trap that the end doesn't matter...

It mattered to Jesus and it should matter to us...

Now, if you can't tell already, I am quite passionate about end times teaching...

Again, I do not make a person's view of end times a test of salvation and never will, but that doesn't mean I don't care about it.

I certainly have a deep commitment to what I believe that Bible teaches about the end...

Now, the question always comes when you look at end times...

How does studying this and understanding this change the way I live today?

Let me offer a few answers to that question as we begin to study the end times over the next few weeks...

1) Studying the end times gives believers hope.

God is going to bring his justice to this earth.

God is going to reward His people.

Evil will not win.

Sin does not pay.

2) Studying the end times honors God.

To try and undersigned His Word is a way to honor the Lord.

Spending your time examining the Scriptures is a great blessing to you and to the Lord.

Throwing your hands up and giving up any hope of trying to understand these things is not a way to honor the Lord.

3) Studying the end times encourages everyone to pursue holiness.

Knowing that God is the final judge of all things,
and that all things exist and happen to honor him...

Is a great motivation to live a life that is pleasing in
His sight...

For believers, listen to 1 John 3...

2 We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

For unbelievers, studying the end times is a great
motivation to pursue holiness in their lives...

And the only way to be holy is to be saved...

You cannot be holy before God on your own...

You can be holy in Jesus Christ...

And you can be in Christ if you are saved...

And you can only be saved if you repent of your
sins and trust alone in Christ...

Without holiness, no man will see the Lord...

And the study of end times encourages our holiness..

A final way that studying end times is valuable is this...

4) Studying the end times highlights the beauty of the Bible.

Folks who take the Bible and make it into some complex puzzle of who the end happens do a disservice to God's Word.

I think the beauty of the Bible is that it speaks clearly and literally about how everything will end.

Sinful men are the ones who cause confusion...

If we simply take what the Bible says in the context of what it teaches about the end...

And realize that the Bible will never contradict itself about how the end occurs...

We will find that the Bible is beautiful in its simple teaching about the end of time...

So, with those applications to our life in mind, let us set out to learn from Jesus about how everything in this world comes to an end...

The outline is on the powerpoint and in your bulletin, so let's look at verses 3-13 a little more closely this morning...

Let's begin by looking at...

I. The Curiosity of the Disciples (3-4)

The key to getting the interpretation accurate is to understand two things that are found in verses 3-4..

First, we need to understand *who* is asking the question...

And then we need to understand *what* they are asking...

Let's begin with the what they are asking first...

The disciples and Jesus have just walked out of the temple after he has taught there all day..

And the message of Jesus in the temple has been that the Jewish religious system is wrong in their view of who God is and how he is to be worshipped.

The people that had been trusted with God's Word has instead twisted it to suit their own sinful desires and fill their greedy pockets..

And as they are leaving, Jesus tells the disciples that the whole system is going to fall even down to stones that hold the temple together..

In other words, God is going to destroy the broken religious system...

Now, the disciples know and believe that Jesus is the Messiah...

They know that He has come to make all things right..

He is going to establish the true religion of Israel.

He is going to be the King that Israel has always needed..

So, they ask a logical question while they are sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple..

Here is a pic of what the scene would have looked like...

So, Jesus is out of the temple and sits down on the Mount of Olives and begins to teach...

And that is why you may have heard this section of Scripture called the Olivet Discourse...

And it go that name because Jesus sat with his disciples on the Mount of Olivet and taught about the end of time...

All the gospel writers except John include this teaching of Jesus in their gospels...

Matthew 24-25 and Luke 21 also contain this incredible teaching about the end times on the Mount of Olives..

And it all begins with a couple simple questions from the disciples...

Jesus, when is all of this going to fall and you become the king that you were sent to be?

Are we there yet?

Now, they also know that Jesus is going to die.

He has told them that over and over.

So, there is confusion about that as well...

If he is going to die, how long after that will he rise and then become the King?

And so that is the “what” of the question?

They want to know when is this world as they know going to come to an end and Jesus become their King?

But the second you need to remember is the “who” of the question...

And this is where many people go wrong in arriving at a proper interpretation of these verses...

The disciples who are asking this are all Jewish men looking for a Jewish King..

They have no idea that Jesus is not going to rise from the dead and immediately take his role as the king of the earth.

They have no way to understand that 2000 years as we still await the King to return..

Remember, they have no idea of the church age in which we live..

Their world revolves around the Jewish faith...

The church isn't even around at this time..

All they know are synagogues and temples...

There is no first baptist church of Jerusalem in their day...

And that is why the who of the question is so important...

Jesus is going to begin his answer in verse 5, and it is going to be a Jewish answer given to Jewish men looking for a Jewish king...

In fact, Jesus is going to skip over the church age all together in his answer because he is going to start with the beginning of the 7 year tribulation period in verse 5.

That is why all of what we are going to read this future is future to us..

Because the beginning of the end kicks off with a 7 year tribulation period for Israel.

It is a time that will be used for 2 purposes in this world..

The primary purpose of the 7 year tribulation is to call Israel to believe in Christ as their Messiah and King...

Another purpose of the tribulation is to deliver judgment upon the unbelieving world...

God's wrath will be poured out like never before in these 7 years...

And two things will happen...

1) It will cause some especially Jews to turn to God in faith in His Son.

2) It will harden others against God so much that they will never turn to Him in faith.

The same sun that melts the wax also hardens the clay, and the tribulation will soften some hearts while hardening the majority of hearts...

That is the why the “who” of this question is so important..

Jesus is going to offer some teaching about the end times to Jewish disciples..

In a very real sense, what we see here in Mark 13 is for the benefit of those who will turn to the Bible in the tribulation...

They will turn to Mark 13 and they will read Jesus’ teaching here and they will find encouragement in very dark days...

And the reason I say that is this...

I fully believe that the church will not be on earth during the 7 year tribulation...

I believe the Bible teaches a rapture of the church prior to the tribulation period...

The church will be in heaven with her Lord while the events described here will be taking place...

Now, the biggest complaint about that is this...

Why would this be in the NT if it doesn't apply to the church?

And my answer is that God is faithful to Israel...

He is not going to leave them without instruction in their most difficult days...

His Jewish disciples asked, what is the end of the world going to be like?

What is it going to look like for Jews as they wait for the Kingdom to come in?

And Jesus is going to answer that question for Jews who will be living at the time when He prepares to return as the King...

And his teaching begins in verse 5 with...

II. The Beginning of the End (5-8)

In verse 5, Jesus begins to teach about the events that will lead up to him returning to earth to begin His rule over the planet..

And he begins with a couple warnings to Israel...

The first is found in verse 5...

Don't be led astray...

As the tribulation begins, confusion will abound...

The church, as the voice of truth in the world, will be gone, having been raptured out.

This will throw the world into a time of panic...

Though the world will be full of unbelievers at that time, people will still be looking for answers.

And the Jews for the first time in 1000s of years will also begin looking for answers...

And I think it is safe to say looking at Jesus' instructions, many Jews will begin to look again for their Messiah...

And Jesus is telling them in verse 5...

Don't be led astray by people who will claim to be the Messiah in that day...

And I am sure that many will come in that day promising to bring order out the chaos of that time...

And Jesus is reminding a future generation of Israel here to not follow false Messiahs in the beginning of that 7 year period...

And then in verse 7, the tribulation will begin with wars all over the globe...

Nations will fight over who who controls the world...

And while all of that unrest is going on globally, Jesus also tells that future generation of Jews that natural disasters will strike the planet as well...

Famines will also break on all over the world as well..

But then, Jesus simply says that as bad as all that will be...

It is simple the beginning of the end...

Jesus says these are like the contractions that come as a woman prepares to give birth to a child...

The are not the actual birth, they are simply a lead up to the birth...

And all of these things...

People who claim to be the Jewish Messiah, and wars and fighting, and earthquakes and famines are all simply the beginning of the end..

They are simply the first part of this 7 year period...

And he tells this to his disciples so that the future generation of Jews alive in this day will know that their King is about to come...

But that isn't all...

There are a few more verses of encouragement and warning that we need to see in verses 9-13...

I have entitled this final section,....

III. The Suffering of Israel (9-13)

In verse 9, Jesus moves from warning that future generation of Jews to preparing them for suffering...

In verse 9, he tells them this...

You are going to be delivered over to the courts and flogged in synagogues in that day...

And the truth is this..

As the tribulation period begins, some Jews will find persecution in a lot of ways as they begin to turn to their true Messiah...

Some will be flogged in synagogues; some will be delivered over before courts...

Yet, the purpose of all of that is so they can testify of their belief in Christ...

And in that way, verse 10 becomes true..

The gospel is preached throughout the whole world as they are captured and beaten and made to identify themselves with Jesus as their Messiah...

However, even in that incredible suffering, God will be with them as HE gives them words to say to preach the good news even in high places...

But maybe even worse than the government and religious persecution will be the family persecution of verse 12...

Jewish families will betray one another to death..

Brothers will betray brothers and parents and children will betray one another..

And yet these faithful Jews in that day will never betray Jesus Christ...

They will remain faithful to him until the very end..

And their true salvation will be seen in their endurance to the end in the worst 7 year period that that world has ever seen.

You think Hitler's persecution of Jews was bad?

It will be a drop in the bucket compared to the persecution of the 7 year tribulation.

And for that reason, Jesus answered the disciples questions on that Wednesday afternoon before his death...

The short answer is this...

Men, my kingdom is coming.

Your desire to see a Jewish king rule the world is going to be a reality.

However, it is going to be painful in the lead up to my arrival for the Jewish people...

There is going to be deception and wars and earthquakes and suffering like you can't imagine..

Yet, my promise to you is that I will be with that future Jewish generation through it all...

I will give them the words to say and the endurance to make it to the very end...

Conclusion

Now, as we sit here as Gentile believers almost 2000 years after this teaching...

We marvel at the goodness of God...

Because the truth is that Jesus has delayed his coming as the Jewish King...

And the glory of His delay is that salvation has come to us...

If Jesus had not delayed but had come to rule right after his resurrection, we would not be a part of that coming kingdom...

Yet, his delay has brought salvation to us, and we are now a part of His coming kingdom if we have repented and trusted in the coming King.

Let me say this with every ounce of seriousness...

We will get to this but let me tell you before you leave out of this building...

The 7 year tribulation could begin at any moment...

As I look at the Scriptures, the rapture will occur without warning...

And the 7 year tribulation period will soon follow...

And the catastrophes of that period will not only fall on Jewish people...

They will fall on everyone who has not repented and trusted alone in Jesus Christ...

In fact, Revelation teaches that a majority of the earth's population will perish during the tribulation period...

And for those who survive, it will be unbearable at best..

So, I must end with this question...

Why would you roll the dice and take a chance of entering into this tribulation period?

Given the current state of the world that you can see with your own two eyes, only a fool would not think that something is not about to happen.

This world is broken.

And it needs fixing..

And that is exactly why Christ is coming...

To rule and run this world as it was meant to be ruled and ran..

The only question about the end times is not if Jesus is coming..

The only question about end times is are you right with that king?

Let us pray.