

## Mark 13

This chapter is one of the longest sermons Jesus gives. It relates largely to the destruction of Jerusalem, but Jesus also discusses briefly man's preparation for the second coming of the Son of Man.

### TRANSLATION - 13:1-2:

1 And after His coming out of the temple, one of His disciples says to Him, "Teacher, behold what sort of stones and what sort of buildings."

2 And Jesus said to him, "You see these great buildings; there will not at all be left here a stone upon a stone which will not be torn down."

### GREEK WORDS:

"Temple" (ver. 1) was first seen in chapter 11:11. The word refers to the temple complex, not just to the building in which sacrifices were offered. Mark uses the word 10 times. "Disciple" was first seen at 2:15. Mark uses the word 46 times. "Stone" was used earlier at 5:5. "Building" is used only here in Mark: 13:1-2, out of 18 uses. "To tear down" is used three times in Mark: 13:2; 14:58; 15:29. These latter two passages are quotations of Jesus' statement here in 13:1. The audience at least knew Jesus had made this statement, if He had not predicted the destruction of Jerusalem before Mark 13. The verb is used 17 times in the NT.

### GREEK GRAMMAR:

The verb "he says" in verse 1 is a present tense verb, to convey the vividness of the interaction. It is considered a "historical present." Even though the action took place in the past, Mark uses the present tense for that purpose.

"Not at all be left" (ver. 2) is an emphatic denial in the Greek language (two aorist subjunctives).

### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Zechariah 14:1-8 predicted the Mount of Olives to be the place where God declares the capture and destruction of Jerusalem.

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

When Jesus left the temple to go to the Mount of Olives, He left toward the east. This is reminiscent of God's Spirit leaving the temple, toward the east, when Babylon invades and destroys Solomon's temple: Ezekiel 9:3; 10:18-19; 11:22-23.

The third temple (after Solomon's and Zerubbabel's, who began the so-called "Second Temple" period) was begun by King Herod in 20-19 BC. It was finally finished in 64 AD, right before the Roman armies destroyed it completely. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 15.11.3), the stones in the temple were very large. Some were 37' long, 12' high, and 18' wide. Herod's temple was eventually twice the size of King Solomon's.

### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

See Matthew's account (24:1-2) and Luke's account (21:5-6) for their parallels to this sermon.

### COMMENTS:

Jesus entered Jerusalem in chapter 11 and came into the temple in 11:11. He cleansed the temple in 11:15-16 when He quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 relative to the religious leaders' abuse of the holiness of the temple. In that context, Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree (11:12-14, 17-25) as a lesson on the fruitlessness of the nation of Israel (as a whole nation). Jesus was walking in the temple in 11:27 when His authority was challenged. In 12:1-12, Jesus told the parable of the tenant farmers who were rejected by the owner of the vineyard and they

were destroyed. He was still in the temple when He spoke about the generosity of the widow in 12:41-44.

In Matthew's account, Jesus has specifically predicted the coming destruction of the temple (24:37-39). The "house" from that text (Matt. 24:38) refers to the temple in Jerusalem. As Jesus and His disciples are leaving the temple complex yet again, one of the disciples points to the beautiful stone buildings that constituted the whole temple complex. It was a magnificent structure and was the pride of the Jewish nation. Since the original temple, prepared by King David and built by King Solomon, was designed by God Himself, the Jews assumed that this temple was a gift from God and as long as the temple stood, then God was with the Jewish nation. The parable of the wicked tenant farmers would teach them that this was not true. God does not dwell in temples made by human hands (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24-25). Jesus explicitly predicts the coming destruction of this temple: "not one stone will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

#### APPLICATION:

Since God intended for His new kingdom to be universal in scope, both geographically and ethnically, then there would be no reason for a physical temple anywhere on earth. Indeed, the church is now the temple of God, individually and collectively: 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Ephesians 2:21; 1 Peter 2:4-5.

The so-called "Wailing Wall" which exists today at which Jews mourn and pray for a new rebuilt temple is not part of the temple itself; it is part of the retaining wall around the temple structure. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that the temple was destroyed totally, just as Jesus had predicted. Stones were separated so that the gold could be melted and removed from the stones.

#### TRANSLATION - 13:3-13:

**3** And while He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, opposite the temple, he was asking Him alone - Peter and James and John and Andrew, **4** "Tell us, when these things will be and what [is] the sign whenever all these things are about to be accomplished?"

**5** And Jesus began to say to them, "See, lest any might deceive you. **6** Many will come in My name, saying that "I am [He]," and they will deceive many. **7** And whenever you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled. It is necessary to happen, but the end [is] not yet. **8** For nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in every place. There will be famines. These things are the beginnings of labor pains. **9** And see to you, yourselves. They will deliver you to the Sanhedrin and in synagogues you will be beaten and before governors and kings you will stand on My account, for a testimony to them. **10** And among all the nations first it is necessary for the gospel to be preached. **11** And whenever they might arrest you delivering [you], do not be anxious beforehand what you might say, but it might be given to you in that hour the things you should say; for it is not you all - the ones speaking - but the Holy Spirit. **12** And brother will deliver brother to death and father, the child, and children will rebel against parents and put them to death. **13** And you will be, being hated by all on account of My name. But the one after enduring to the end, this one will be saved."

#### GREEK WORDS:

"Olives" (ver. 3) was used first at 11:1. "Peter" was first mentioned by Mark at 3:16. He is identified as "Simon" at 1:16. "James" was first mentioned at 1:19. The apostle "John" was mentioned first at 1:19. "Andrew" is mentioned only four times in Mark: 1:16, 29; 3:18; 13:3. He is mentioned 13 times in the NT. "Sign" (ver. 4), used 77 times in the NT, is used by Mark 7 times, first at 8:11-12. "To be accomplished" or "to be completed" is used only here in Mark, out of 6 uses. "See" (ver. 5) connotes the idea of "beware." It was used earlier at 4:12. "To deceive" was used by Jesus in 12:24, 27. He will use the verb again in the next verse.

“Name” (ver. 6) has a rich theological history throughout the Bible, beginning with God requiring the utmost respect for His name. The authority of the name of Jesus is elevated to that of God Himself. The word was used first by Mark at 3:16-17. This is the only use of “war” (ver. 7) in Mark, out of 18 uses. “Rumors” was used first at 1:28. “To be troubled” is used only three times in the NT: Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:2. The “end” was used earlier at 3:26. “Nation” (ver. 8) was used earlier at 10:33. “Kingdom” was used earlier at 1:15. “Earthquakes” is used 14 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “Stone” is only used here in Mark, out of 12 uses. “Labor pains” is found four times in the NT: Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8; Acts 2:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

“To deliver” (ver. 9) has been used multiple times by Mark, since 1:14. “Sanhedrin” is used 22 times in the NT, three times in Mark: 13:9; 14:55; 15:1. The “synagogue” was found first at 1:21. “To strike” or “to beat” was used earlier at 12:3. “Governors” is used 20 times in the NT, only here in Mark. It is a generic word which means one who “rules.” “King” was used earlier at 6:14. “Testimony” or “witness” was used earlier at 1:44. “To preach” or “to proclaim” or “to herald” was used earlier at 1:4. Mark uses the word extensively, 14 times. “Gospel,” literally “good news,” is found 76 times in the NT, first at 1:1. Mark uses it 8 times.

“To arrest” (ver. 11) was used earlier at 1:38. Mark will use it again at 14:42. This is the only use of the verb “to be anxious beforehand” in the NT. “Spirit” was used earlier at 1:8, 10, 12. “Holy” was used earlier at 1:8. “Holy Spirit” is used four times in Mark: 1:8; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11. “Death” (ver. 12) was used earlier at 7:10. “To rebel” is used at Matthew 10:21 and here. “Parents” is used only here in Mark, out of 20 uses. “To put to death” is used 11 times in the NT, twice in Mark: 13:12; 14:55. “To hate” (ver. 13) is only used here in Mark, out of 40 uses of the verb. “To endure” is only used here in Mark, out of 17 uses in the NT. “To save” was used earlier at 3:4.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

The verb “he was asking him” (ver. 3) is a singular verb, even though Peter, James, John, and Andrew are all mentioned in the text. Probably they are “asking” through Peter, their frequent spokesman.

The verb translated “should say” (ver. 11) is a present tense imperative verb. Jesus uses the plural pronoun “you” five times in verse 11. The apostles would be guided by the Holy Spirit; see also Matthew 10:19-20.

There are 19 imperatives between verse 5 and verse 37.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

When a Jew was “beaten” or “flogged,” the Law of Moses limited the number of times to 39 (Deut. 25:1-3): see also Acts 5:40; 2 Cor. 11:23-24. There are other references: Matthew 23:34; Acts 22:19. The intra-family division was pictured also in Micah 7:6. In the synagogue, the whip was a strap of leather from a calf, divided into four strips, plaited with four smaller strips to make it stronger.

“Labor pains” were used by the prophets frequently to denote suffering that would precede God’s judgment: Isaiah 13:8; 26:17; Micah 4:9-10; Hosea 13:13; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 49:22; 50:43.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Some “false Messiah” (ver. 5-6) were Theudas, named Judas, in Acts 5:33-37, and an Egyptian for whom Paul was mistaken in Acts 21:38. Then there was Simon Bar Choba (“Son of the Star”) who claimed to be the fulfillment of Numbers 24:17; it came along in 132-135 AD.

Three wars (ver. 7-8) were inspired by the Roman Emperors and there were other revolts that had a negative impact on the Jews. Four emperors reigned in 69 AD, which caused a lot of turmoil. A major earthquake hit Crete in 46-47 AD, another occurred in Rome in 51 AD, another in Laodicea in 61 AD and still another in Pompeii in 62 or 63 AD. The most serious famine occurred in the 50s AD, mentioned in Acts 11:28.

The “Sanhedrin” (ver. 9) has appeared before in Mark, even though this is the first use of the word. The “priests, elders, and scribes” composed the Sanhedrin. Different cities had their own Sanhedrin, but the one in Jerusalem was the largest and most significant.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

This paragraph has its parallels in Matthew 24:3-14 and Luke 21:7-19.

#### COMMENTS:

Jesus is discussing the destruction of the temple and the invasion of Jerusalem. But He warns His followers that deceivers will take advantage of the crisis to draw disciples after themselves. Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask Him about the impending destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (ver. 3-4). Jesus first warns about possible deception (ver. 5). Others will come and claim to be the Messiah or the one to deliver Israel (ver. 6).

They will take advantage of the crises that will come: wars, even rumors of wars (ver. 7). Those events will take place but they will not signal the end of the temple. Nation will attack nation (ver. 8), and kingdom will attack kingdom. Earthquakes will happen and so will famines. But these events are just the beginning of the labor pains. The “birth” of the destruction of Jerusalem is still coming.

When Rome invades Jerusalem and lays siege to it, the Jews will blame the Christians. They will say that the God is punishing Jerusalem because the Christians (and Jews who become Christians) are guilty of blasphemy, for saying that Jesus is the Son of God. Therefore, Jesus warns them that they will be delivered to the Sanhedrin (ver. 9) and they will be beaten, or flogged, in the synagogues. They will be brought to trial before governors and before kings. There, they will bear testimony to Jesus Christ. First, they will be witnesses of the fact that Jesus has predicted all this. Secondly, they will have the opportunity to preach the gospel of Christ (ver. 10). While the apostles still do not understand all that Jesus is planning, now they understand that they need to preach the gospel as much as possible before the “end” comes. They need to be concerned about converting their Jewish family and friends to Christ before the temple gets destroyed and they have no more access (under the Law of Moses) to God’s presence.

Jesus promises them, in verse 11, that they should not worry how they will defend themselves nor how they will preach the gospel (what they will say) when they are arrested. Rather, it will be the Holy Spirit speaking through them. Jesus will promise them the same thing when they are celebrating the last Passover feast in John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:13; 20:22-23. See also Luke 12:11-12. Jesus also warns that the conflict will cause controversy and division within the family (ver. 12). In fact, Christians will be “hated by all” because they confess Jesus Christ (ver. 13). The Romans will hate them because they do not worship the gods of the Romans, for which they will be called “atheists.” The promise, however, is that the one who endures faithful until the end will be saved.

#### APPLICATION:

The book of Acts records examples of this paragraph being fulfilled in the decade or so after Christianity was established. Paul defended himself before Governors Felix and Fetus and King Agrippa (Acts 24-26). Paul appealed to Caesar, so that he was sent to Rome under Roman guards.

Persecution will continue to be a part of the church’s experience on earth: John 15:18-21; 16:1-4; 17:14-16; 1 John 3:13; 4:4-6; 2 Timothy 3:12.

Christians should continue to be careful not to be deceived by false teachers (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1). The false teaching itself might be different, but if the teaching is not from Christ or His apostles, it is still false. While this context is related to the destruction of Jerusalem, Christians should also take seriously the need to preach the gospel all over the world before Jesus comes back the second time. While we do not have the promise of direct inspiration by the Holy Spirit, we do have the gospel message which lives and breathes with the power of the Spirit (Heb. 4:12) and we need to teach that message accurately and trust it

implicitly. Then again, we can also expect hatred and persecution because the road to heaven is not the easy path to take for it leads us away from self-service and self-sufficiency to God the Father.

Paul will write that the Gospel had been preached to “every creature” by the time he wrote Colossians (1:5-6, 23). This is likely hyperbole, but it does suggest the truthfulness of Jesus’ statement. See also Romans 15:19, 23; 16:26.

#### TRANSLATION - 13:14-23:

**14** “And whenever you might see the abomination of desolation having stood where it must not, the one reading let him understand, at that time those in Judea must escape into the mountains. **15** And the one on the rooftop must not come down nor must he enter to take anything out of his house, **16** and the one in the field must not return back to take his cloak. **17** But woe to those having [babies] in the womb and those nursing in those days. **18** But pray that it might not happen in the winter. **19** For there will be those days tribulation which has not happened of such a kind from the beginning of creation which God created until now and will not at all happen [again]. **20** And unless the Lord shortened the days, there would not be saved any flesh; but on account of the elect whom He chose He shortened the days. **21** And at that time, if anyone might say to you, “Behold here [is] the Christ; behold [He is] there,” do not believe. **22** For they will arise, false Christs and false prophets and they will give signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect. **23** But you yourselves watch. I have told you all things in advance.”

#### GREEK WORDS:

“Abomination” (ver. 14) is found 6 times: Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 16:15; Revelation 17:4-5; 21:27. “Desolation” is found only three times: Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20. “To read” is used 32 times in the NT, earlier in Mark at 2:25. “To understand” is used 14 times in the NT, earlier at 7:18. “Judea” was used earlier at 3:7. “To escape” or “to flee” is used 29 times in the NT, earlier at 5:14. “Rooftop” (ver. 15) is used 7 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “Cloak” (ver. 16) was used earlier at 2:21. “Womb” (ver. 17) is used only here in Mark, out of 9 uses. “To nurse” is used 5 times: Matthew 21:16; 24:19; Mark 13:17; Luke 11:27; 21:23.

“To pray” (ver. 18) is used 85 times in the NT, earlier in Mark at 1:35. “Winter” is used 6 times: Matthew 16:3; 24:20; Mark 13:18; John 10:22; Acts 27:20; 2 Timothy 4:21. “Tribulation” (ver. 19) is used 45 times, earlier in Mark at 4:17. “Creation” (the noun) is used 19 times, three times in Mark: 10:6; 13:19; 16:15. The related verb “to create” is only used here in Mark, out of 15 times. “To shorten” (ver. 20) is only used here and in Matthew 24:22. “Elect” is used 22 times, three times in Mark: 13:20, 22, 27. “To choose” is used 22 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “To believe” (ver. 21) is used earlier in Mark at 1:15. “False Christs” (ver. 22) is used here and Matthew 24:24. “False prophets” is used 11 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “Signs” was used earlier at verse 4. “Wonders” refers to the effect miracles have on those who see them. The word is used 16 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “To deceive” is used here and 1 Timothy 6:10. “To say beforehand” is used 12 times, only here in Mark.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The abomination of desolation is mentioned by Daniel in 9:25-27; 11:31; 12:11.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The “abomination of desolation” is mentioned outside the Bible only once, in 1 Maccabees 1:54, 59, referring to the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes who offered a pig on the altar in Jerusalem, thus desecrating it. This happened in 168 BC. It is reported that he also built an altar to Zeus in the temple. Before the Bible student definitively applies that phrase to that event, he should acknowledge that the author of 1 Maccabees was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Exactly what Jesus is referring to as being the “abomination” is not known, other than He refers to the Roman armies entering the temple.

When Rome invaded Judea, Josephus writes in *Jewish Wars* that the Romans crucified as many as 500 Jews a day to encourage Jerusalem to surrender. They crucified so many, they ran out of wood for the crosses. Some turned to cannibalism as a result of the siege. Josephus might have exaggerated when he writes that over one million Jews were killed and almost 100,000 were made slaves (*Jewish Wars* 6.9.3). But the extent of the devastation is clear. It is interesting that Josephus believed that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in his day, about which he recorded his history, was the fulfillment of Daniel (*Antiquities* X. xi.7).

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

This paragraph is also found in Matthew 24:15-28 and Luke 21:20-24.

#### COMMENTS:

Jesus now begins to talk about the signs that would accompany the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. He begins by drawing his audience's attention to the prophecy given by Daniel (see above under "References from the OT"). This "abomination of desolation" or "abomination" which causes desolation or desecration, refers to some action that would be sacrilegious in the eyes of God. "Abomination" is often used in the OT to refer to pagan gods. Matthew explicitly records Jesus mentioning Daniel (24:15) and Luke records Jesus tying this prophecy to Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (21:20). Jesus challenges His audience to "understand" what is happening (ver. 14). Most scholars believe Mark added this command to the sermon, but there is no reason not to believe that Jesus used it and referred to Daniel when He said it. When Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, Jesus warns those in Judea should flee to the mountains. Indeed, Christians sought refuge in the village of Pella when Jerusalem was attacked.

Jesus further warns those who might be on the housetop not to come down to get anything out of his house (ver. 15) nor if he is in the field, he should not return to grab his cloak (ver. 16). The cloak would be worn in the early morning and then removed when the day warmed up. Jesus is sympathetic to women who are pregnant or nursing when Jerusalem is sieged (ver. 17). Travel will be difficult for them. Also, travel in the winter will be difficult so Jesus encourages His audience to pray the siege does not happen in winter (ver. 18). The streams would be flooded and difficult to cross.

The suffering which will happen in those days will be worse than anyone had ever experienced before (ver. 19). This might be hyperbole, which is common (Exo. 9:18; 10:14; 11:6; Deut. 4:32; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:2). Yet, the blood of all the prophets of God, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah (Matt. 23:35-36), including the blood of God's Son (Mark 12:6-9) will come on that generation of Jews! The destruction would have been even worse if the days had not been shortened (ver. 20) for the sake of God's people, Christians, the "elect," those *in* the "Chosen One" (Luke 9:35). The siege was, in fact, interrupted for some still unknown reason. After the Passover of 70 AD, Vespasian suspended the war to become emperor and sent his son, Titus, to finish the work. Also, the final siege itself only lasted five months.

Again, in verse 21, Jesus warns His followers not to be deceived. Many will point to others as being the Messiah; indeed, even today Jews do not accept Jesus as the Messiah. They are still looking. False Messiahs and false prophets will deceive others through false signs and false wonders (ver. 22). They will try to deceive Christians; this is why Jesus gave us His word, so that Christians will not be deceived (Eph. 4:14-15). Jesus has warned His followers in advance of these events (ver. 23).

#### APPLICATION:

While the expression "abomination of desolation" from Daniel's prophecies might have referred to the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, Jesus clearly states that the prophecies refer to the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman army. There is no further prediction in the NT of any such "abomination of desolation" happening again after that destruction.

Jesus warned His followers when and how to escape; He even encouraged them to pray that God would alter the siege for their benefit. He shortened the days so that more Christians would be saved. In fact, history records that no Christians died in the siege of Jerusalem. Yet Jesus was still concerned that His followers would not be deceived; thus He warned them.

Jesus' prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem is yet another proof that He is a prophet (and more than a prophet).

#### TRANSLATION - 13:24-27:

**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 out of heaven falling, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. **26** And at that time, they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with much power and glory. **27** And at that time He will send the angels and He will gather together the [His] elect from the four winds from the end of the earth to the end of heaven."

#### GREEK WORDS:

"Sun" (ver. 24) is used 32 times in the NT, first in Mark at 1:32. "To darken" is used five times: Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24; Romans 1:21; 11:10; Revelation 8:12. "Moon" is used 9 times: Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25; Acts 2:20; 1 Corinthians 15:41; Revelation 6:12; 8:12; 12:1; 21:23. "Light" is used only here and Matthew 24:29. "Stars" is only used here in Mark, out of 24 uses. "To fall" was used earlier at 4:4-5. "Powers" was used earlier at 5:30. "To shake" is used only here in Mark, out of 15 times. "Clouds" (ver. 26) was used earlier at 9:7. "Glory" was used earlier at 8:38. "Son of Man" is a Messianic term, based on Daniel 7:13-14. It is used in the NT 88 times and in Mark, 13 times, beginning at 2:10, 28. "Angel" (ver. 27) was seen earlier at 1:2. "To gather together" was used earlier at 1:33. "End" is used 6 times, only here in Mark.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

For examples of catastrophic (apocalyptic) language used by the prophets to describe God's punishment of various nations, including Israel and Judah, see: Isaiah 13:10; 24:19-23; 34:2, 4; 8-13; Jeremiah 4:11, 23-28; 15:5, 9; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15; Amos 8:9.

There are also references in the OT to God gathering His "elect," the faithful of Israel: Deut. 30:3-4; Isaiah 43:6; Jer. 32:37; Ezekiel 34:13; 36:24.

There are also passages where God (or Jesus; Matt. 10:23) is said to be "coming," but the reference is to Him "coming" in judgment, not in person: Isaiah 19:1; Amos 4:12.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

This paragraph is also found in Matthew 24:29-31 and Luke 21:25-28.

#### COMMENTS:

Jesus is discussing the end of the temple in Jerusalem, which will be a catastrophic event in the lives of the Jews. It will seem like the end of the world to them. And, Jesus is talking effectively about the end of the whole Jewish nation, as far as God is concerned. The family of Abraham had served its purpose in bringing Jesus into the world. If they wish to be right in the eyes of God from now on, they will have to embrace Jesus Christ and become Christians. In terminology reminiscent of the OT prophets (see above under "References from the OT"), Jesus views the end of the Jewish nation and its capital and its temple in terms of the end of the world.

The sun will be darkened. The moon will not give its light. The stars will fall from heaven. The powers in the heaven will be shaken. The coming of the Son of Man in verse 26 is not referring to the literal, physical, bodily coming of Jesus Christ. In terms reminiscent of the prophets (see above under "References from the OT"), Jesus is referring to Him coming *in judgment* against Jerusalem, the temple, and the nation of Israel. This is the coming anticipated in 12:9. In John 2:11, John writes that when Jesus performed His first miracle, He

“manifested His glory.” When Jesus comes against Jerusalem, in the “person” of the Roman armies, He will again manifest His “glory” as the Judge who condemns the people who rejected Him.

Verse 27 pictures Jesus sending out His angels and He will gather - through His angels - His elect. In this way, Jesus preserves His own people, despite any harsh experiences they might have in the coming destruction of Jerusalem. He might not save them from the tribulation from a physical perspective, but He will save them from the spiritual repercussions, if they “endure to the end” (ver. 13).

#### APPLICATION:

Later in Mark, when Jesus is on trial before the Sanhedrin, He is accused of predicting His destruction of the temple and rebuilding another in three days (14:58; a prophecy found in John 2:19). When the high priest, in response, asked Jesus if He was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus responded by predicting that the Sanhedrin would see the “Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (14:62). The Sanhedrin would see, within about four decades, the deity of Jesus when that temple was destroyed, just as Jesus had predicted. It, and the resurrection from the dead, would verify Jesus’ message and His identity.

When the temple was destroyed in AD 70, it would no longer serve as the gathering place for God’s people to worship Him. From the resurrection of Christ, He would become the “gathering place” for God’s people to worship Him. He is the “propitiation” (Rom. 3:25), which is the translation in the Septuagint for the “mercy seat,” where the high priest offered the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. In Philippians 3:3, Paul writes that Christians are the “true circumcision,” who worship God in the Spirit of Christ and glory in Christ Jesus.

Jesus will talk about the end of the world in verses 33-37. When Jesus returns, the whole world will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-12). Therefore, there will be no sun to darken, nor a moon to stop giving its light, nor stars to fall out of heaven. They will all be destroyed. This passage (Mark 13) is not talking about the second coming! But the defining characteristic of the second coming of Jesus will be its unexpected timing. He will come as a “thief in the night” (Matt. 24:36, 42, 44, 50; 25:13; Mark 13:33; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Peter 3:10). Christians, then, need to “be alert” and faithful until death overtakes us or Christ returns to take us home.

#### TRANSLATION - 13:28-31:

**28** “And from the fig tree, learn the parable. Whenever its branch already might be tender and the leaves sprouted, know that near is summer. **29** Thus also you yourselves, whenever you might see these things happening, you know that near it is at the door. **30** Truly I say to you that this generation will not at all pass away until all these things happen. **31** Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not at all pass away.”

#### GREEK WORDS:

“Fig tree” (ver. 28) was used earlier at 11:13, 20-21. “Learn” is the verb related to the noun “disciple.” This is its only use in Mark, out of 25 times. “Parable” was used earlier at 3:23. “Branches” was seen earlier at 4:32. “Tender” is used here and Matthew 24:32. “To sprout” is used here and Matthew 24:32. “Leaves” is used 6 times, earlier at 11:13. “Know” is used earlier at 4:13. “Summer” is used three times, in Matthew 24:32; Mark 13:28; Luke 21:30. “Door” (ver. 29) is used earlier at 1:33. “To pass away” (ver. 30) is used earlier at 6:48. “Generation” was used earlier at 8:12. “Words” (ver. 31) was used first at 1:45.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

“Not at all” in verse 30 is emphatic. All that Jesus had predicted would indeed happen on that generation.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:



The stability of the earth is used in other places in connection with the validity of God's word: Psalm 102:25-27; Isaiah 40:6-8; 51:6; 54:9-10; Jer. 31:35-36; 33:20-21.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The fig tree (ver. 28) would produce leaves in March or April. The early harvest would come in May or June.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

This paragraph is also found in Matthew 24:32-35 and Luke 21:29-33.

#### COMMENTS:

Jesus is still talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and the nation of Israel. That was the beginning of this sermon (13:3-4) and He doesn't change His topic until verse 31. The reason Jesus gives this parable is to show that the *signs* of the destruction of Jerusalem will be visible, so that His people can escape the death and destruction coming. When one sees the leaves on the branch of the fig tree, then he knows that summer is near.

By the same token, Jesus points out in verse 29 that once His followers, His disciples, see the events happening which Jesus began to detail in verse 14, then they will know that the coming of Christ's judgment against Israel and its temple is "near." The apostles had asked when the temple would be destroyed; Jesus now tells them, "This is the *sign* for what you have asked."

In verses 30-31, Jesus emphasizes what He has said in two ways. First, He uses His typical "truly I say to you," which He has done 13 times in Mark. The expression is not found outside of the Gospel accounts, where it is found a total of 70 times. Second, He states that that current generation would not "pass away" (i. e., "die") until all these things take place. This statement shows us that everything He has been discussing since verse 5 relates to the destruction of Jerusalem. Verses 24-27 are not talking about the second coming of Christ because Jesus says "all these things will take place" during the lifetime of that generation.

#### APPLICATION:

Jesus had said earlier in His ministry that Someone "greater than the temple" is here (Matt. 12:6). It was therefore necessary and appropriate for Him to destroy the temple and bring to an end all the animal sacrifices which were offered in that temple. King Solomon had anticipated a possible destruction of his temple (1 Kings 9:6-8) and the prophets predicted its destruction: Micah 3:12; Jeremiah 7:12-15; 12:7; 22:5; 26:6. See also Jeremiah 26:20-23.

The parable of the fig tree, *because it relates to a "sign,"* has to do with the destruction of Jerusalem, its temple, and the nation of Israel. Jesus is emphasizing to His disciples that they need to keep their eyes open for these signs so they can see when Christ's judgment on Israel is "at the door." But then Jesus mentions the destruction of "heaven and earth" (ver. 31) at which point He shifts the discussion to the coming destruction of the world, when Jesus returns a second time. But that time He will not come to earth; Christians will meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).

#### TRANSLATION - 13:32-37:

**32** "But concerning that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, except the Father. **33** See, be alert; for you do not know when the time is. **34** Like a man on a journey leaves his house and gives to his slaves the authority to each his work and to the doorkeeper he commanded that he might be alert. **35** Therefore be alert! For you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether evening or midnight or at the rooster crowing or morning, **36** lest coming suddenly He may find you sleeping. **37** And what to you all I say to all, be alert!

#### GREEK WORDS:

Jesus has used the verb “to see” (ver. 33) five times in this sermon: 13:2, 5, 9, 23, 33. He uses it in the sense of “beware” or “take heed.” “Be alert” is found four times: Mark 13:33; Luke 21:36; Ephesians 6:18; Hebrews 13:17. “Time” is used 85 times in the NT, five times in Mark: 1:15; 10:30; 11:13; 12:2; 13:33. “On a journey” (ver. 34) is found only here in the NT. “Slaves” is used first at 10:44. “Authority” is used first at 1:22. “Work” is used twice in Mark: 13:34; 14:6. The word is found in the NT 169 times. “Doorkeeper” is used at: Mark 13:34; John 10:3; 18:16-17. “To command” is not the common verb translated “to command.” This one is only used 15 times in the NT; it is used in Mark also at 10:3. “To be alert” is used three times in this sermon (it is different than the word we have translated “be alert” in verse 33): 13:34-35, 37. It is also used at: 14:34, 37-38. The verb is used 22 times in the NT. “At the crowing of the rooster” (ver. 35) is used only here in the NT. “Sleeping” is used 22 times in the NT, first at 4:27, 38.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Verse 35 refers to the four divisions of the day used by the Romans. The evening would be 6-9 PM, midnight was 9 PM to midnight, the rooster crowing would be midnight to 3 AM while morning was 3-6 AM.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

For the idea of an owner coming back unexpectedly, see: Matt. 24:45-51; 25:14-30; Luke 12:35-38; 12:42-48; 19:11-27.

#### COMMENTS:

Jesus shifts His topic at verse 31 when He introduces the destruction of the heavens and the earth. When that will happen, in contrast to the “signs” He has mentioned relative to the destruction of Jerusalem, no one knows (ver. 32). The angels do not know nor does Jesus Himself know. Only the Father knows when His patience will come to an end and He will send the Son. When the Son rises from His throne, eternity will begin and the spiritual fate of each individual will be sealed at that moment. Thus it is important for each human being to know God (Heb. 11:6) and to obey the Gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:7-9) and be found spotless and blameless, spiritually speaking (2 Peter 3:14-15).

When the heavens and earth are destroyed, when Jesus returns, no one knows (ver. 33). Jesus gives yet another parable to illustrate the need to be busy being faithful until He comes. A man leaves on a long journey and leaves his slaves in charge of his household (ver. 34). He also commands the doorkeeper to stay alert. No one knows when the “Lord” returns. It was, in fact, uncommon for people to travel at night in those days since it was difficult and dangerous.

Jesus emphasizes again in verse 35: “Therefore, be alert!” The “Lord” or “Master” in verse 35 is Jesus Himself. Just as in the parable no one knows when the lord is coming - in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or early in the morning - so no one knows when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will return. Man does not want to be found “sleeping spiritually” (ver. 36) when the Lord comes back suddenly. Consequently, Jesus tells every single soul on earth, from the day He uttered the words: “Be alert!”

#### APPLICATION:

Jesus has told His audience four times in this paragraph to “be alert,” using two Greek verbs. If man knew when Jesus would come again, he would be unfaithful and self-serving as long as possible and then become “faithful” at the last minute. In that case, he would not be serving God out of love and devotion but, still, out of self-serving motivations. Thus, Jesus requires us to be faithful all the time until He returns. Then Christians will receive their reward which is beyond what man can imagine (Eph. 3:20).

Jesus will rebuke His disciples five times in the next chapter, in the garden, for sleeping instead of praying: 14:34, 37-38, 40-41. “Sleeping” is used later for spiritual lethargy: Ephesians 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-7. Christians live in hopeful anticipation of Jesus’ return: 1

Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:10. Indeed, our weekly communion reminds us that Jesus is coming again: 1 Cor. 11:26.

It has troubled some individuals that Jesus, who is “God in the flesh,” does not know when He will return (ver. 32). Yet, it is likely that in “emptying Himself” (Phil. 2:6-8) to become a servant, Jesus also allowed Himself to be limited in His knowledge and power. Luke 4:14 states that He entered His ministry “by the power of the Spirit,” a likely reference to the Spirit giving Jesus His miraculous powers.

This prediction of the destruction of the temple, and Jerusalem, might be the reason the crowd turned against Jesus, from praising Him to condemning Him.