

The Destruction of the Temple Part 2.
The Abomination of Desolation.
Mark 13 14-23

Psalm 136
Hebrews 13:1-17
Responsive Psalm 37: 1-9

Today we are going to be continuing where we left off last week in the book of Mark chapter 13, looking at verse's 14-23 but I think we should read starting in verse 1 as a recap, and since we were left off last week continues on in this weeks passage as well. So there were a few things that I think are helpful to refresh our minds of as we read this, this morning. The first thing is that this passage, verses 1-13 is Jesus' response to the question of When will the temple be destroyed. It is a very direct question, that Jesus answers rather directly. There is no teaching in parables, or examples, but he answers Peter, James, John, and Andrew specific question clearly.

The next thing to keep in mind with the destruction of the temple is what the temples purpose was to begin with. The temple practices, and rituals were established by God when Israel came out of Egypt. It was during this time that he also gave them the commandments, which we commonly refer to as the 10 commandments but as we know there were many more then just 10. It was at this time, that God, called, a particular people to be his people, and he gave them all of these things to be examples, and instruction as to His righteous requirement's and to set them apart from all of the other nations. But now, were we are here in the book of Mark, Jesus has arrived, the promised Messiah has come, and the reality is that all of these things that were shadows, that pointed to the Messiah has now been fulfilled and now that Christ has come there really is no need for the examples.

I always like taking a step back and thinking about the over arching message of the bible, and as we read through we can see God's plan unfolding, from creation, to the promise of a kingdom, to the establishment of the nation of Israel, and the promise of a savior, the messiah, a king everlasting over an everlasting kingdom. There were many who took these promises as being a literal promise to the mortal nation of Israel, but as we learn through the new testament the promises are fulfilled in Christ to all those who have faith and rest in him, it is they who are the true Israel, it is made up of all those who God has separated and put aside to be his holy nation, Israel coming out of captivity in Egypt was the prototype, the foreshadowing of the true Israel who are God's people drawn out of every nation into the family of God. All that are in Christ, are spiritual Israel, all that are spiritual Israel are the adopted Children of God, by faith, through the promised Seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ.

This is always what it was to be, there has been no deviation, no amendment, no parenthetical age in God's plan. From the beginning of time, until now, everything before Christ looked forward to the coming of the promised Messiah, the promised King, the one who was to come and establish his nation forever. And now, that Christ has come, everything points back to Christ, who having died, and rose again fulfilled the righteous requirements of God's just law for us, bearing our sin, bearing our punishment, so that we may be called children of God. So the reality is that There is no long a need for a temple, and all the rituals and practices that came with it. Even the law is no longer binding upon God's children, for the righteous requirement of God's law has also been fulfilled in Christ and laid to our account. The law still serves as instruction and a shadow of God's holy righteousness that he requires, it still points to God, but it does not apply to all those who have been covered by the Blood of Jesus Christ, for the requirements of the law have been fulfilled in him, and applied to us.

So when we read this morning about the destruction of the temple, the coming fall of Jerusalem, and the tribulation and suffering we need to remember the distinction between the Nation of Israel, and the Spiritual Israel. So let us read this morning starting in verse 1, and going through to verse 23.

So the first 13 verses here, seem to be quite obviously tied to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple but then in verse 14 it seems to shift. Verse 13 ended by saying all those who endure the sufferings and tribulations by faith will be saved. Through all of these persecutions, Being arrested, being delivered before the rulers, brothers betraying brothers, parents their children, and children their parents. If your faith is true, and you stand strong through such time, unwavering, and not denying your faith you shall be saved. Now this isn't that this is teaching some litmist test, saying that if you do these things you will be saved, but rather it is a statement that God's people will be faithful, they will endure, and they will be saved, and will stand in faith through all of these trials, even persecution unto death. We get a sense of that in verse 11, where Jesus says when they bring you before the leaders to testify, to tempt you to deny your faith, do not worry what you will say for the holy spirit will give you the words. If you are God's, do not worry about denying him, or failing him and losing your faith, your faith will stand, and by it so will you.

Now that brings us to our passage we are looking at today, and as I mentioned there seems to be as shift of focus, in Mark's writing here there are things that seem to suggest that Jesus is no longer talking only about the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem but it may also be alluding to something further a greater tribulation. As Aaron had said last week, when reading such passages as these it is good to have a telescopic view, that is to have a view that looks both closely at what is relevant to the time of the writing, and also further out to that which may also be relevant to a later time. And we can see that here in this passage. There has been a progression in this chapter, Jesus is imploring his disciples to hear, to watch, and finally to see. starting in verse 7, we see the reference to hearing, when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, then in verse 9, is watching, watch out for yourselves for they will deliver you up to the councils, and here in verse 14, is the culmination of this progression, which is seeing. "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let the reader understand) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

The phrase, the abomination that brings desolation was taken from 3 passages in the book of Daniel. Daniel 9: verse 24. "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy." One can not read this without thinking of Christ and his crucifixion. , verse 25. "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build up Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after sixty two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, till the end of the war desolation are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to the sacrifice and offering, and on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

While reading this it seems a bit cryptic and we can easily see how it could be applied to the end of days, but also to the account of the destruction of Israel and the Temple, which we know happened in 168BC with Antiochus Epiphanes who sacrificed goat's upon the altar in the temple. But all that being said, One thing that stood out to me though while reading this is the word determined was repeated 3 times. Seventy weeks are determined, the end of the war of desolation are determined, and the consummation which is determined. If this does not scream out God's sovereignty I don't know what does. Nothing happens outside of God and his will, all things have been determined, the amount of time, the time, and the result is fixed and it can not change

.God's prophesy is not like one of those we hear today, or that has rise up generation after generation, God's prophesy is sure, because it is he who has determined as such. Over in chapter 11, verse 31 of Daniel is the 2nd reference of the abomination of desolation. Notice again, the wording here verse 29..." At the appointed time." So many people are watching, waiting for the end of days, trying to read the signs, trying to determine themselves when that time will come..but the reality is that no one knows except God himself for it is he who has put this all together.

Verse 29" At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant . And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress, then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. So those are the 3 accounts in Daniel of the mention of the abomination of desolation, which Jesus is likely referring to here in mark 13. The fact that Jesus is using this very same terminology alludes to the fact that even though the prophesy in Daniel has been fulfilled in 168BC, it is obvious that there is another abomination that brings desolation that Jesus is referring to.

And this is where the controversy starts, it is in the attempt to understand what is being said and to apply this warning message. There are 3 major ideas as to the way to apply this passage, which we actually touched on a little bit last week. The first, is that this is a reference to Emperor Caligula, who attempted to erect statues of himself in the temple of Jerusalem and have these statues worshiped as a god. This fits the idea of an abomination in the temple, in a holy place, but it does not bring with it desolation nor did the Jews flee Judea into the mountains. Also these statues were never actually constructed for general Petronius, in charge of operations in Israel refused to comply, and in fact was himself was involved in the assassination of Caligula. It is for this reason that many do not believe that this is actually the fulfillment of Daniel, or this passage here in mark.

That brings us to the 2nd belief as to what this passage is talking about and that is the destruction of the temple by Titus in AD 70. But the problem with this as being the complete fulfillment of this passage was that Jews did not flee from Jerusalem, but rather they fled to Jerusalem to find safety from the Roman's and from the rebel bandits outside that were in the surrounding areas. And the 3rd understanding of this is an understanding of a pure reference to the end of days. Since all of these things have not been completely fulfilled, it only stands to logic that this must be referring only to the arrival of the man of sin and the great final tribulation which is mentioned in 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2, which says " Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gather together to him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as through the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means, for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

This seems to match verse 14, in our passage this morning, the description of someone parodying God standing where he does not belong seems to fit as well. So what I think we are seeing here, is as I mentioned earlier a telescopic view, where some of this has indeed been fulfilled with the destruction of the temple by Titus in AD 70, but it definitely points to something more, something greater yet coming. It is also pointing to an ultimate fulfillment in the rise of the man of sin, and the 2nd coming of Christ. So unlike how some want to see this prophecy as an either or, it is either AD 70, or it is the end of the age, I believe that this is and, and both..it is both the destruction of the temple in AD 70, and a foretelling of the end of the age.

But we do not have a full proof sign as to what, or when this abomination that causes desolation will arrive. And just like the disciples here, the church throughout the ages has always searched for proofs of the end. But as I said last week, that is not the mission, nor should it be the focus of God's people. We should not be concerned with the end times, with a great tribulation, or persecution, but rather be concerned going about the ministry all the more diligently in the time that we have been given. This is the heart and the focus of God's children. To be ready with the gospel, with the message of hope to a dying world.

The following verses here, 15-23 describing the coming of persecution is just like this mention of the abomination of desolation. It is an, and, both, not an either or. None of this can be applied to one direct for sure time, fleeing from war, fleeing from persecution, is nothing new but something that has happened all throughout history but that being said, this also applies to a greater tribulation as verse 19 says, "For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he chose, he shortened the days. Verse 22, and 23 echo back to verses 5 and 6, but the meaning here is deeper. In the first 13 verses Jesus is dealing with the direct question of when will the temple be destroyed and what signs will show that time is coming. There were many who had come with a false claim to messiah ship during the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, but notice in verse 7, he says, the end is not yet. These false prophets, and false messiahs that were to come around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem were just that, a sign to the destruction of Jerusalem, but here in verse 21-23 is mentioned again about false Christ's but in the context it has shifted not to the destruction of Jerusalem but to the end of days.

False prophets, false messiahs' are nothing new, and even as we see in the first few verses of this chapter, seem to exist in every generation. Ironically, when Jesus was here on earth during his ministry he performed signs and wonders, but it seemed that few believed him, conversely when false prophets come they will perform signs and wonders exploiting every means possible to gather followers to themselves and sadly, they will be believed, even to the point that Christ warns that if it were possible, even the elect could be deceived. Jesus implores his listeners, these disciples to watch, and be wary to pay attention to all of these things. This admonishing to be watchful, is not one that some may think means to read the signs of the times to determine if or when the end has come. But rather it is a watchfulness in the present time, being wary of false teachers, testing what they teach to see whether or not it is true and grounded in sound biblical doctrine. We have many today who are taking scripture and twisting it to their own ends, for their own financial gain. Teaching that by our faith we can manifest our desires, we can solidify our own financial freedom, through the reciting of words we can heal the sick, and some even claiming to have the power to raise the dead.

Then There are others who teach a deceiving gospel, a gospel that does not rely on Christ as it's center but ever so slightly skews the mark to the church itself, corrupting the gospel, teaching that redemption, and forgiveness of sin lies within the church itself, within the clergy and the practices, and sacraments of the church. Taking the focus away from god's redemptive work on the cross, and instead of focusing on the messiah there seems to be a large focus on the virgin Mary. Decieving, drawing people away from the true gospel and leading them into a false gospel of the church, much like the Israelites had done with the temple services and practices. Then There are some that teach a gospel of free will, putting the weight of salvation on man's choice, instead of God's sovereign grace and calling of his children. Making mankind the sovereign decider in the act of salvation. Making God, subject to man's sovereign will whether or not they will receive God's gift of salvation.

There are also those who are crying out this is the end of days, they are those who are watching for signs and predicting the 2nd coming...to which as we know, all of these predictions have all been wrong, which proves that their prophesy is false and and not from God. These are false prophets, false teachers, leading the world astray. Now already anticipating the argument against what I just said, I will answer by saying, yes, people can still be saved within some of these groups...but it is not because of what these groups teach, it is despite what these groups teach. More often then not, any perversion, or misrepresentation of the gospel will produce a perversion, or misunderstanding of faith and salvation. Some perversions of the gospel are more deceptive, and are further from the truth then others, and many of these I have mentioned do not hardly even open the bible other then to cherry pick a verse or 2 to support their own message. Yet some, while the gospel maybe misrepresented, there is enough present of the gospel message that one can understand their stance before God and need for a savior, and while there may be false ideas as to how this happens, or how one responds, there is at least a focus upon scripture and driving one to Christ, instead of the church functions, or the power of your words spoken in faith.

I saw all of this to point out the simple fact, that if we are to look at the signs that Jesus says here, we could say we are in the last days could we not? There are wars, rumor of wars, there is persecution, families turning against each other, government oppression of believers, people imprisoned for their faith, and even in some countries put to death because of their faith. WE have people fleeing, seeking refuge in foreign lands, we have famines, we have earthquakes..all the signs, but the end is not yet. We live in the last days, Christ has come, salvation has been secured in him, God's plan for salvation has been played out in Jesus Christ, and now we wait, patiently, faithfully, for his return. There have already been 1000's of years, and generations who have passed, and each generation believes that theirs is the last generation, looking to the signs, saying that this MUST be the end days, but the end has not yet come. As we saw in the book of Daniel, all of these things have been determined, by God.. and are only known, by God. We should not be speculating, trying to guess, for when the end comes is honestly of little importance to us. We are to be faithful in the time that we have been given, being watchful for our own lives, that we remain true, that we remain faithful, that we do not allow ourselves to be carried away by these various false doctrines and teachers but to remain true to the word of God and to stand on that word despite the persecution it may bring, for as verse 13 says, "You will be hated by all for my name's sake, but he who endures to the end shall be saved."

Worry not about the end of days, but rather endure in the present days, focus on that which God has given you today, not what he hasn't given you yet tomorrow, for he may not give you tomorrow, but that is ok, because we rest in him, our faith is in the one who says that we are his children, and he will never leave, nor forsake us, and each one that God has adopted through his sovereign grace and mercy will not be lost.

That is the message of this passage, if I was to put it in a nutshell, it is that trials, persecution, and death will eventually come for each and every one of us..but that is not for us to worry about do not worry about our deaths, our trials, our lives, but rather be faithful in all that God has given us whether trial, or times of peace. And to be honest, it is the times of peace that we must be all the more attentive to God, for we tend to put God on the back burner until a trial arises and we cry out to him for deliverance. So even during these times of peace and mercy, it is ever as important that we are watchful to endure in faith until that great day that we will be gathered together around the throne of God.