

Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Lecture 20, Mark 12:38-13:36, Poor Widow, Eschatological Discourse

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This is Dr. Mark Jennings in his teaching on the Gospel of Mark. This is session 20, Mark 12:38-13:36, Poor Widow, Eschatological Discourse.

Hello, welcome back.

As we continue working through Mark today, we're going to finish up our interactions and Jesus, the controversial stories, the exchange and debates that he's been having with the religious leaders in Jerusalem. There's been seven of them. We'll have the final episode today and then also move into one of the more known but complicated teachings of his in Mark 13 and the Olivet Discourse.

So, we've been, just to remind ourselves, Jesus has been in the temple teaching. He's been being questioned on his on matters of authority and his understanding of Scripture. He's been tested by the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees.

We had a scribe actually ask him a question about the Greatest Commandment, which was a very amicable discussion. We talked about that. And then we finished last time with Jesus putting forth this question, asking the scribes, in essence almost challenging the scribes to answer this question about how it is that David can say of his offspring and call him Lord.

It is almost a challenge to the scribes to answer that question, which, of course, we, as a reader of Mark, know-how that issue is resolved, that the Son of David can be called Lord by David because the Son of David is also the Son of God. Now, I want to look at 38 through 44, the final episode of Jesus' public teaching. Here, the center of the focus is the religious position of the leaders and of the scribes, Jesus' polemic against the scribes in contrast with the humble faith of a widow.

So, let's look at 38 through 44 and finish out chapter 12. And in his teaching he said, Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money in the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, Truly I say to you, this poor widow has put more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she, out of her poverty, has put in everything she had and all she had to live on. You know this begins with the warning, Beware of the scribes.

That's similar to his warning of Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Herodians. Jesus now warns the disciples against the pride of the scribes. And notice their pride is evident in their desire for all of the trappings that come with social status.

They wear fine robes. They want to show their splendor. They want to receive their applause.

They want to receive honor, sit in important places, and keep in mind in an honor-shame culture like this, where you sat conveyed honor. I even think about Jesus' teaching in the Galilean countryside when he was in these houses, if you recall, and there'd be all these crowds, and people couldn't get in, yet somehow the scribes were still seated and had room in the house to hear from Jesus. And so, it sits with this honoring.

Notice what he says about what they do. They like these greetings. They have these best seats in the place of honors, and they devour widows' houses and, for a pretense, make long prayers.

So obviously you have this one tension between their wanting all these trappings of social honor but are so cruel. This picture of devouring widows' houses is quite a cruel picture, especially when you keep in mind that these were scribes and the law has in place all of these protections of the widows. That it was the scribes, if anyone, it should have been the scribes who understood what the law said, should have been the ones protecting the widows, not devouring the widows' houses.

In other words, not benefiting. I think the picture here is they're benefiting from the plight of widows, that they prey upon the powerless and the disenfranchised. And then would somehow justify these actions or would make these long prayers to indicate that they truly are the ones who are most in keeping with what God is doing.

And Jesus declares upon them greater condemnation. Notice the warning here when we are in Jerusalem. Jesus' warnings are coming with judgment claims.

Beware the scribes. They will receive the greater condemnation. And it is sort of in this context of what he has just said about how the scribes love the honor that comes from the, and loves the wealth and loves the social benefit.

That he's sitting down, he's in the treasure, and he's watching people put this money into what is probably a larger metal receptacle. And I think that's important because if it was this metal receptacle, box, jar, however, it was sort of arranged, a coin that came in, came in in different metals and came in in different sizes, especially with the pilgrims bringing in the different coins. And large amounts would make a sound.

The type of coin you use would make a sound. This would actually be an opportunity, if you wanted people to know how much you had given, the sound the coins would make as it cleaned in would have kind of given a hint of that. So, you have this receptacle, and you have these pilgrims coming in, and these people coming in, and they're giving just these great amounts to the treasury.

Many rich people put in these large sums. And then comes this poor widow. Now, we've already had Jesus mention widow, that how the scribes, the experts of the law, are not taking care of widows but are devouring widows' houses.

They're benefiting from the widows. And here comes this widow who puts two coins together, together might make a penny. So, to the smallest amount.

He uses the widow as an example of not only affirming what she has done but as a statement of judgment against the scribes and these other people, the religious establishment. So there's a sense that the widow should have been the last person giving money to the temple, for the temple and the religious leader should have been taking care of the widow. Yet the widow is giving all that she had and that statement that she's giving implies this trust.

It's this picture of faith, of full trust that she will be provided for. So, keep in mind that this stems from this question that the scribe asked. We had a scribe ask a question, then we had scribes being mentioned.

And I think we're supposed to draw this line. The scribe had asked, what is the greatest commandment? Jesus had answered, full devotion to God, quoting the Shema, love of neighbor as yourself. And here is this widow showing full devotion and giving all that she had.

And this money that had been given, obviously, would be given to the temple establishment, and other people would benefit from it. So, you might even have here, this widow is a visual picture of the kingdom of God. But also, Jesus draws the point in that others were giving out of surplus.

In other words, it wasn't sacrificial giving. It wasn't a giving that hurt them. It was an extra amount of giving.

And in the context of what he just said about the scribes, I think the implication is giving in large amounts that they would gain honor from forgiving. Whereas she gave out of her poverty, she gave out of no desire for honor, no desire for acclaim, but as a full trust in God and faith in what would be done and how she would be protected. It's a statement of trust there.

So, this end of chapter 12, as we now get into Mark 13, chapter 12 is, this ends really the final public teaching of Jesus. So, this statement about faith and trust and giving fully and completely of everything for others, this re-enactment of the two greatest commandments in context with beware of the scribes who seek only to show pretense, but yet desire acclaim for themselves, ends in many respects Jesus' teaching against the religious leaders and his teaching on, you know, in Jerusalem and in the public setting. I think knowing that, then this small story of the widow, I think it's right to read that as Mark chose that to be the final word, if you will, of the public teaching that we're supposed to see something in there, more than just a cute little story, but a fitting summary to what the language of judgment and discipleship that Jesus has been using.

All right, let's continue now. Let's look at Mark 13. When we move into Mark 13: I want to say just a little bit about, sorry, let me just slide down here.

When we start talking about Mark 13, I want to say a little bit about eschatological discourse. So, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem now sort of comes to a conclusion. He's gone to Jerusalem, he's left, he's gone, he's left, and now he'll be leaving, and the next time he sort of enters Jerusalem again, it is going to be for, you know, the final arrests and trials and crucifixion.

And what we've been seeing here up to this point has been a failure of Israel, especially its leaders, to obey its commission. It has institutionalized disobedience. We've seen a lack of fruit.

We've seen Jesus speaking about inevitable judgment, especially at the end of the temple. We've had the cursing of the temple, we've had the parable of the tenants, and now we move to chapter 13. And our understanding of Mark 13, then, I think needs to be in this context, this context of what Jesus has been doing all along here in sort of these statements against religious leadership, the statements against the temple, and his giving out of judgment.

Interestingly, Mark 13 is the longest continuous teaching found in Mark. Before Mark 13, the longest continued teaching was roughly six sentences. Here it's 39, sitting around a very similar eschatological theme, namely the destruction of the temple, Jerusalem, and the coming of the Son of Man, with also perhaps pointing to the crucifixion of Jesus as well.

More on that in a little bit. One of the questions, of course, is it apocalyptic? Is this discourse rightly called an apocalyptic speech? And there is certainly some similarity to apocalyptic passages that we see elsewhere, like in 1 Enoch, 37 through 71, and some other Second Temple and pseudepigraphical apocalyptic genres. And it's frequently called Mark's little apocalypse.

But given the typical elements, when we talk about apocalyptic writing, we usually expect a heavenly vision of some sort, often an angelic mediator. There's usually no summation of human history, if you will, here in Mark 13, as we would expect. So apocalyptic genre usually has a summation of human history, imagery of some sort, angels, heavenly visions.

These are these aspects that we come to see that a lot of apocalypses have in common as a genre, and we don't see that. And so maybe it's better not to think of this as apocalyptic discourse but to think of it as eschatological discourse. It is eschatological in the sense that the last days, final days, and movements are anticipated, as well as the beginning.

Eschatological also in the sense of the age that is instituted with the arrival of Christ in the last days. And I think there are some shadows of the cross in Mark 13. There's something in it that also, I think, points to what's about to happen, more of that as we go along.

And if I was going to walk you through a structure here, then I want to talk about these different passages. It seems that verses 1 through 4 have this idea, so locating on the temple and some questions there. Then 5 through 23 seems to be a movement.

24 through 27, son of man. 28 through 31, the fig tree. And then 32 through 37, watchfulness.

Now when we begin looking at Mark 13, this is one of those passages in Mark that has a diverse interpretation. There's a wide range of understanding of what Jesus is talking about here. And I think we have to tread very carefully as we walk through Mark 13 in terms of any degree of certainty.

We need to be humble in our thoughts here because of the different pieces; there is no clear answer for everything that Jesus is doing in Mark 13 in a way that satisfies all possible options. But other things we look through, as I want us to keep in mind with thinking about Mark 13, that this does concern the destruction of the temple. So, there is the relationship between what happened here and what Jesus was doing earlier in Mark.

And that there's reason to wonder and think through just what is the relationship between what Jesus has been saying, what he says, and what happened as it plays out in the temple. Let's walk through this. Look at the first four verses.

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, look teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings. And Jesus said to him, do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. As he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, tell us when will these things be and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? Now I think when we look at verse 1, remember this isn't some country simpleton looking at these big buildings and being amazed by it.

They've been entering back and forth from the city. They would have gone on this trip before. So most likely, again, it's this pride thing.

And not in a bad way, but in a wow, look at our city in this great temple. It would have been a majestic sight. It would have been something that you could see time and time again and still make the same comment.

Indeed, a stone that was found that was part of the Western foundation of the temple would have weighed around 600 tons. I think this is just this statement of just how amazing it would be. And this statement of the temple on how huge it is sets the stage for verse 2. Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

I think there are some interesting things we should see. First of all, that this is a statement about the destruction of the temple is now clear. They're remarking on the temple and he has just said there will not be one that's thrown down.

And that language of throwing is a very active language. So I think this confirms what we've been talking about with Jesus' words against the temple being a curse of the temple, and this is now making clear what was suggested. But also there's an interesting, this stone among stone.

I was having a conversation with a gentleman a while ago and wanting to argue that he was arguing that Jesus' words can't be referring to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD because there are still stones available that you can be seen. And that since not every stone has been cast away, that there's a wailing wall and all of this. And I think all that missed the point.

If you look at 2 Samuel 17:13 and Haggai 2:15, when they talk about the temple building, it's stone upon stone. And so, the language Jesus is using here about how one stone, there will not be left one stone upon another, is the exact reversal of

construction language. The construction language is building one stone upon another and now one's being taken off.

So, it's not that there can't be if there's a single stone still connected to another stone; somehow, it hasn't been met because that's not the figurative nature of the language. It's talking about the undoing of that which you build. Notice, too, that there's a lack of unless you repent language.

When you see the destruction language of Jerusalem and Temple and the prophets, it is often connected with unless they turn from their ways, unless they repent unless they listen, then I will hear them. There was usually this, there'd be this opportunity, if you will, for something to change. There isn't here.

So, this is not a warning statement, in other words. This is not a statement of all this will happen unless they repent and come to me. This is a statement of judgment that judgment has been reached.

And now it's just simply the waiting of the passage of time until that judgment is made manifest. The Temple is going to be undone. We see interesting things here.

Jesus, as he makes his statement, he sets down on the Mount of Olives. Now the Mount of Olives is not a neutral place in the Old Testament. This could have been just geographically where he was at, but we also know that with the Mount of Olives, you had, this was where had some judgment, this connection with Ezekiel, with the Mount of Olives, this connection with eschatology, and so there's even some semblance here.

So, he sits down to teach, and the big four are there. We have our three, we always do, but Andrew, he gets to be at this one, so Andrew's here, and he sits down with the four of them who asked him privately, when will these things be? What will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? Now I think what is being asked here reveals the assumption that the destruction of the Temple is synonymous with the end of all things in their mind, that they're connecting those two together. Indeed, if we look at Matthew 24, that's made even more explicit.

Matthew 24:3, which is the same discourse in Matthew, is even made more explicit. So, I think when they ask these questions about these things, which is in the plural, not just this thing if it was, when will this thing happen? It would have been a reference to what he said about the Temple, but instead, they're asking, when will these things be? I think, to me, indicates that they're likely understanding that the destruction, what he has just said about the Temple, will accompany the end of all things, or the great arrival, the sign of his coming, if you will, as well, that they're seeing this as one particular event. And that would, of course, make sense.

How could the destruction of the Temple be a scatological event? But that, I believe, is their error. Their error is in their assumption that the destruction of the Temple and the end of all things are the same, and I think Jesus begins to unpack in his answer that error. Let's pick this up in verse 5. So, in verse 4, they ask for a sign when these things are about to be accomplished.

Verse 5 through 8, and Jesus began to say to them, see that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name saying, I am he, and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed.

This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places.

There will be famines. These are but the beginning of birth pains. So, notice they ask for a sign, and what I'm arguing is that they, I think, are asking for a sign of the end of everything, like when is the end of the age about to come.

And Jesus first begins by answering what isn't a sign. That's what his answer is in 5 through 8. He starts to list several items, but he tells them that these are not signs that the end is immediate, but rather these are birth pains. And notice, too, when he's discussing this, there's a sense of a passage of time between now and when the end will occur.

There's this passage of time that there are nations will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are but the beginning. He says that there will be many coming in my name who will be leading people astray.

There will be wars and rumors of wars. This must take place, but the end is not yet. All of that implies a passage of time, not some sort of immediate thing that would occur.

And so, I think that what he is categorizing Jesus in his answer is he first says, see that you are not deceived, see that no one leads you astray, and then lists a series of events that would be painful events that people are going to experience. Wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, these nations going against nations, kingdom against kingdom. The type of thing that would create an atmosphere that makes it easy to be deceived, to make it easy to seek for whatever hope, and there will be people claiming to either be the Messiah, I think that's what, you know, or coming in the name of Jesus perhaps, that could be referred to either way, that statement, many will come in my name saying I am he.

He's saying that when you see all of these things, you're going to want to think, this must be the end. Look how bad things are. He's saying do not be deceived.

What I just told you is not a sign of the end. These are necessary. These are just birth pains.

They're not the end, and I think that's important to recognize because it's so easy, I think, as we work through this to go, oh these must be signs of the end of the age, because that's what the disciples have asked for, except actually what Jesus is saying is the exact opposite. These aren't signs. They're birth pains.

They're the beginning, but not the right at the moment or the threshold. We continue to work through 9 through 13. I think it even kind of solidifies it.

He starts again, but be on your guard for they will deliver you over to councils and you will be beaten in synagogues and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them and the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations and when they bring you to a trial and deliver you over do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say but say whatever is given to you in that hour for it is not you who speak but the Holy Spirit and brother will deliver brother over to death and father his child and children will rise again parents and have them put to death and you will be hated by all for my name's sake but the one who endures to the end will be saved. Notice here, then again, this passage of time, there's persecutions, there's removal from synagogues. I mean that's going to require a passage of time when the church begins meeting in synagogues and starts becoming separated from it.

This certainly anticipates what will happen, but there's a wider feel. There's this language of perseverance, which you know has this sort of Daniel 12 idea, this strong motif of these nations rising against you that the gospel will be proclaimed must first be proclaimed to all the nations. That requires a passage of time.

Now I think some groups misunderstand that as a way of indicating that when we can finally predict the arrival of the end of all things once the gospel has gone to all the nations then it's done as if there could be even some sort of control or predictability associated with it or that the going to the nations as a way of ending everything is not the not the missional statement here. What is being presented is a picture of this event. What Jesus I believe is laying out of this time period, of the time period between what will be his departure and his second coming, that this time period is going to be characterized by two aspects.

One is suffering, famine, earthquakes, war, this unique suffering and persecution, hating you for my name's sake, turning you over brother against brother, that there will be suffering and persecution that will characterize you know Jesus the time period from Jesus' departure to his arrival, his second coming, and the gospel going out to all the nations. That this time period be characterized by persecution and

mission, the gospel going out and suffering. And there's an I think there's a beautiful irony here that the just the way God has designed it is because we, the church, bring the gospel to the nations; the nations hate the church because they reject Jesus; they reject the gospel.

Yet the church is almost not trying to be I'm not trying to be flipping about this, but missions almost boils down to the persecuted going to the persecutors so that they might become part of the persecuted. You know there's this flip of everything. You know this statement about the gospel must go out to all the nations I think is also a hopeful statement so that no matter how oppressive the situation may seem, whether it be by natural suffering or government oppression, Jesus is affirming that the gospel will be going out to all the nations.

The suffering of this time period, verses five through eight, the persecution doesn't stop the progression of the gospel. You know, there are some interesting, I think, exodus hints here; do not worry about what you will say. It's hard not to think about Moses and Moses being worried about what he would say and God affirming that he would be given his words.

So that's a sort of similar promise. But there's this pattern, these birth pains. I think these are stillbirth pains, gospel going out, and persecution resulting.

And this endurance to the end I think is not a statement of those who endure to the end of this time period will be saved, but rather those who endure to the full extent of this time who don't waver in their faith. That endurance and persecution is an indication of genuine faith. We look at it again now 14 through 23.

So, we've been talking about these big birth pains, this time period that are not signs of the end as I'm reading it. But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be, let the reader understand. Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Let the one who is in the house stop and not go down nor enter his house to take anything out. Let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. The last are women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days, pray that it might not happen in winter.

For in those days, there will be such tribulation that has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect whom he chose, he shortened the days.

And then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or look, there he is, do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders to lead astray. If possible, the elect be on your guard.

I have told you all these things beforehand. You know, the way I've sort of been working through 14-23, this seems very specific. You know, when we looked at verses 5-13, they were mostly generalities.

Wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, suffering, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom. You'll go before rulers, councils, governors. The gospel will go to all nations.

But here there is a lot of specificity, isn't there? You see, but when you see the abomination of desolation, it seems to be a specific event. Now, the abomination of desolation idea stems from Daniel 9, 11, 12, 1 Maccabees, chapter 1. And an abomination of desolation was this concept that developed where it would involve the Jerusalem temple, an altar, and sacrificial ritual, where something is a pagan item, or sacrifice is put into place in the temple, trying to make the temple activity into a pagan activity. So, it's usually centered around the temple.

So, even this abomination of desolation idea has an idea of the temple still being there. Jesus had just said the temple would be destroyed, but this seems to be talking about the temple being there. And a person standing there rather than a thing, what Jesus says there in Mark, that when you see the abomination of desolation, you're understanding where he ought not to be.

Now, that could be an actual person doing an act, it could be a standard representing the person. Notice again how specific the language is about how movement must be quick, that you must leave immediately, go to, you know, those who are in Judea need to flee to the mountains. It's very specific.

I hope that it doesn't happen in winter, and I hope that you're not nursing in those days. And I think what we have here is a very particular birth pain, that Jesus has been speaking in general about the birth pains and the sufferings, but here he's given a very specific one. I think this is the sacking of Jerusalem.

This is the destruction of the temple. This will be when Rome comes in and levels it, and they do bring standards in; they do things that would constitute an abomination of desolation. And I think he's here, he's talking to the disciples and letting them know something that's going to occur just in a matter of decades.

And giving very specific that when you see this start to occur, the people need to flee immediately. You know, the language, the idea that this is the final event, I think, seems a little bit difficult given the statement that for in those days, there'll be such a

tribulation has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now and never will be. I mean, they never will be part seems obvious if it is simply something that occurs right at the moment of the end of everything.

And indeed, such as never been nor ever will be is not uncommon hyperbolic phrasing. You know, you look at, you see similar phrasing in Exodus 9 and 11 and Deuteronomy 4, Daniel 12, and Joel 2. Though it is very total, I'm not trying to just diminish it. Indeed, what we know historically about the sacking of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple was that there was significant, almost unparalleled in terms of percentages of death and destruction.

And so, I think there's some actuality to that. And even the shortening of days, I think, speaks to that moment of Rome's arrival that God determined when it ends, and he stops it out of compassion for the elect, which I think here is a reference to most likely Jewish followers of Jesus who are caught up in this judgment that's happening on Jerusalem. So, this is the idea Jesus had just said: the temple is going to be undone.

And we know, of course, from the Old Testament picture that God often uses other nations as judgment upon Jerusalem and Israel. And this is what is occurring here. He's already declared that that judgment is coming.

And here he's giving very specific instructions that it is of when to know it's arriving and the severity of it. And in doing so, there are going to be Jerusalem Christians acutely who could get caught up in this. And this is an instruction that he's given to the disciples to then continue on to the Jerusalem church and those in Judea that when you see this run and flee.

And so, I think what we're to look at with this passage is 9 through 13 is not to misread this as a sign of the end, but as a particular birth pain that this abomination of desolation is now characterized that the end is to come, but rather shows judgment, providence, grace, endurance, as well as we'll give evidence in a matter of decades of how great a prophet Jesus is that he did truly predict this. I want to continue on looking then at 24 through 27. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds and from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. And those days are often used to describe theophany or divine intervention, judgment language.

We see that Jeremiah 3, 5, 31, Joel 2, Zechariah 8. So, I think now finally Jesus is answering the question of when or what are signs when all these things will come to

pass. So, the disciples' question, I believe, erroneously conflated the destruction of the temple and the signs of the end. Jesus first starts by talking about what's not a sign, including that not a sign is the unique tribulation that is the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

So, he said, okay, I'm going to answer your question about when the Jerusalem Sacking will occur by telling you what you can look for when the abomination of desolation. But under locate that within what's not a sign, locate it within that time period. He now, I believe, does present the answer to that question of what are indications of the end of things.

And I think the irony is the sign of the end of things, the sign of Jesus coming in his kingdom of his arrival is his coming. I mean, that's kind of how it lays out, is how do you know when the end is here? It's because it's here, that you're not to be deceived by anything that might be assigned towards it. I mean, that's how this language is playing out, that if you're looking for indicators that the end is near, you are putting yourself open to destruction, I mean, to deception.

Rather what Jesus is saying is that when the end has come, it will be obvious that the end is here. He uses cosmic language, language that we see in Isaiah 13 and 34, Ezekiel 32 and Joel 2, and Amos 8, the type of language that is used in Isaiah 13 to describe the destruction of Babylon, Jerusalem, and Jeremiah 4, Pharaoh's army, and Ezekiel and of Samaria and Amos. And so, you have this depiction of, and then they will see when all the suns, when everything is darkened and the stars are falling, then they will see the sun of man coming in clouds with great power.

And so what he's presenting is the day of the Lord, the end of things, the fabric of creation can no longer hold it together, the great gathering of the saints. Notice that even this gathering from all over the world has a passage; this gathering of light has a passage of time, but the idea is that no believer is left out. And this great gathering from the four corners and the four winds are all sort of gathered together.

I think then this interesting sort of cross picture though, if this is the picture of the day of the great day of the Lord, of the sun of man returning and judgment happening and how creation itself starts to falter, we see a little bit of an inbreaking of that at the cross with what happens at Jesus' crucifixion. We'll pick that up in a little bit, but I wanted to make sure that there's a hint of cross overlay. And then Jesus ends from the fig tree, learning its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out leaves, you know that summer is near.

So also, when you see all these take place, you know that he is near at the very gates. Truly I say you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven nor the son, but only the father. Be on your guard and keep awake, for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.

Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come in the evening or at midnight or when the rooster crows or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you, I say to all, stay awake. This last bit we look at here is Jesus' teaching.

One is it has, you know, when you see these things that he's just described, know the end is near, but that's coupled with, but do not think you know the time. I mean, the deception is always to think you know the time of the son of man's arrival. Do not think, he says, do not think you know the time.

So, everything you see cannot be a predictor of the time. Because the instruction does not, you know, the command does not think you know. And you even have that great statement, not even the son knows, but only the father.

And there's so much debate on that. Is that something Jesus momentarily didn't know, but now he knows? Is that something exclusively held in the knowledge of the Father, yet somehow not in the knowledge of God the Son? Is this indicative of the fact that Jesus, God the Son, surrendered when he became incarnate? Lots of discussion, but I think for our purposes, where we want to look at it is to notice it's an argument of foolishness. In that, it's if God the Son himself doesn't know the timing of his sending; how foolish it is for any of you, for any of us, for any of the disciples to be asking the question of when the end is coming, and what will be the signs of it.

Instead, we are to watch out, and to be awake, and to be prepared, that we are to know the certainty that he will return. This is what Jesus tells the disciples, that he will return, that there will be an end and a great gathering. But then when that will be, to question it, is false.

This is sort of how I think Mark 13 plays out, that Jesus goes back and forth between answering this question about the temple, with this question of the time in between his comings, within the answering of when his, what are the signs of his return, and the signs of his return are when creation itself is undone, and the elect are gathered. You know, in here, in Mark 13, and of course in the Covenant Elevated Discourses, there is so much to think through, but perhaps we would, and be best just to leave with what Jesus says to his disciples, is that the gospels should go to the nations. Suffering is not to surprise us, but the hope is that he will return and gather all of us.

We will pick up Mark 14 next time.

This is Dr. Mark Jennings in his teaching on the Gospel of Mark. This is session 20, Mark 12:38-13:36, Poor Widow, Eschatological Discourse.