

Sermon Notes: The Not so “Great Tribulation”

By: Zach Sloane, Oct. 11/20

Recap:

Mark 11-12 “When they were approaching Jerusalem...” Jesus and disciples about to enter passion week.

- * Triumphal Entry
- * Cursed the fig tree
- * Drove people out of the temple
- * Fig tree discovered as withered
- * Questioning, testing, harassing by the religious leaders - lamb inspected.
- * He has gone into the temple complex and sat down watching people give their offerings
- * Sandwiched within all this was a teaching about having the faith of God.

Intro:

Mark 13: Jesus and his disciples were sitting in the temple. The disciples are really impressed with the buildings and architecture.

Mark 13:2

“And Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

Really hard to overstate what kind of dramatic statement this was and how devastating it was to all of their expectations and hopes for what a Messiah would be and do.

Mark 13:3-4

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 4 “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”

Thus begins the Olivet Discourse. Jesus talked about some seriously bad stuff that was going to happen. These warnings and statements form the basis of a lot of people’s eschatology, their belief in the end times.

There are some unpleasant realities, such as the very real prospect for people to experience a lost eternity in which they do actually perish. Wrath. Judgement.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:36

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Romans 1:18-19

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

Wrath is revealed already! What does it look like...?

Romans 1:24,26, 28

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts...For this reason God gave them up to vile passions... God gave them over to a debased mind...”

God’s wrath does not look like death and destruction and mayhem, it looks like giving people over, letting them have the very things that they incessantly want and pursue. No longer getting in their way!

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin kills. Sin robs us of the life God intended for us. With sin comes death, and feelings of separation and alienation, shame, guilt, self hatred and divisions and quarrels. Sin and the deception it brings are the devil’s doorway into our affairs.

But sin, devil, death curse are already judged.

John 12:31-33

*“**Now** is the judgment of this world; **now** the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die.”*

Hebrews 9:27

It is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgement.

κρίσις, εως, ή (**krisis**) : a decision, judgment (NOUN)

John 5:24

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and **shall not come into judgment**, but has passed from death into life.”*

The decision, the verdict has already been rendered in Christ. Righteous, holy, without blame and above reproach! See Ephesians 1:4

So with all that in mind let's look again at this passage with these foundational truths in place.

The disciples marvel at the temple and buildings of the Jerusalem, Jesus tells them, there is a time coming when not one stone will be left upon the other. And then the disciples ask him:

Mark 13:3-4

"... "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

As in when will the temple and buildings of Jerusalem be destroyed? After:¹

*** False Christs, False prophets that mislead many. Deception! (Mark 13:5-7)**

Eusebius of Caesarea 260 - 340 AD: Bishop and Church Historian "After the Lord was taken up into heaven the demons put forth a number of men who claimed to be gods." (Time of incredible longing for Messiah to deliver from Romans.)

*** Wars and Rumours of Wars. Nations and Kingdoms against each other. (Mark 13:7-8)**

Wars broke out all over the empire. Before 70 AD four emperors were violently murdered and civil war broke out in Rome. There were tonnes of rebellions rising up.

*** Earthquakes and famines in various places (Mark 13:8)**

Acts 11:28 we are told about a great famine. Paul went on a collection tour raising money to help people deal with it.

Ancient writers talk about major earthquakes all over in: Colossae, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Crete, Rome, Judea, and most famously in Pompeii in 63 AD, what many believe to have been the precursor to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii in 79AD

*** Persecution, hatred, criminal charges, death and betrayal. (Mark 13:9-13)**

Massive persecution. Acts 8:1 Saul was part of great persecution. Herod persecuted the Jews in Acts 12. AD 64 when Nero burnt Rome down then blamed Christians, starting a massive wave of persecution.

¹ For a greater explanation and detailed notes refer to the works cited for this section: "AD 70 and the End of the World" by Paul Ellis & Victorious Eschatology: A Partial Preterist View" by Harold R. Eberle and Martin Trench..

*** The “desolating sacrilege” set up where it ought not to be and a time to run, flee. A time to escape and not look back (Mark 13:14-18)**

Referred to in the book of Daniel and many believe it to be the presence of the invading army of Romans soldiers. At any rate the instructions were that *“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15 Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 And pray that your flight may not be in winter.*

Whatever the desolation it affected the those who lived in Judea.

*** A time of tribulation and suffering that the world has never seen before, and never will again. So bad that God would intervene to stop what was happening so there would be some people left. (Mark 13:19-20)**

The atrocities, depravity, and death that was unleashed in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem was literally unparalleled in history. 1 million deaths in four month period. They let the Passover celebrants into city to trap them, lay siege and starve them. Hundreds of thousands were crucified, tortured, enslaved, starved, burnt. There was no wood left to crucify anyone, and no space to put the crosses. Cannibalism, treachery, deceit, Afterwards up to 100 000 taken as slaves, forced to fight one another, die as entertainment for victorious Romans.

Luke 21:24 “Jerusalem was tramped underfoot by the Gentiles.”

*** After this tribulation the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, stars will be falling from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Mark 13:24-25)**

Many put this tribulation out into the future because they believe that the sun and moon and stars have not fallen, their lights have not gone out, and the Son of man has not come in the clouds yet. So this must be speaking of a future tribulation.

But the Bible often speaks of the sun moon and stars to refer to political and spiritual rulers.

When Isaiah prophesies the bringing down of the Babylonians it was said:

Isaiah 13:1, 10

“The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw...For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.”

When Ezekiel prophesied about the end of Pharaoh the king of Egypt he said:

Ezekiel 32:1-2, 7-8

“And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him:...

When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, And the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, And bring darkness upon your land,” Says the Lord God.”

In both cases we know that the Pharaoh and Babylon, both empires were brought down, yet in history we know that the sun and moon and stars did not stop shining, fall from the sky or significantly alter in their function.

But after 70 AD and the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, rulers and political leaders attached to that system fell, were shaken, and in many respects were rendered inoperable.

Then Mark says you will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds and he will send his angels out to gather his elect.

Daniel 7:13

“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.”

They will see Him coming in great power and glory ***is Him coming to the throne***, the Ascended and Glorified Jesus approaching the father at his right hand, something that happened after the Resurrection but that they would see as done.

He would then send his angels (or messengers) to gather the elect.

After all this happens, he then says, as per his second coming:

Mark 13:32-37

*“But of that day and hour ***no one knows***, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is...”*

So what do we learn from all this, especially in the context of Thanksgiving?

1. Jesus came to save the world not condemn it nor destroy it

Sin has its own deadly consequences. He didn't want Jerusalem to be destroyed. He wept over it.

Luke 19:41-44

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes..."

Instead of embracing the prince of peace, they continued to fight and agitate the Romans in an attempt to bring in God's kingdom through violence and their own nationalistic religion. They were destroyed because they rejected him and continued in their own broken path. This devastated him.

People read these passage as Jesus pronouncing judgment, but I see the Prophet of God trying his best to warn people. And remarkably it worked. History tells us that all the Christians in the city actually did listen and left when he said to flee.

History tells us not one Christian perished, because collectively they heeded the prophetic warnings of Jesus and all left Jerusalem when they saw the signs. They literally fled to *Pella*, to the mountains and avoided the Roman armies.

He wasn't pouring out destruction, he was actively trying to help the Jewish people escape it.

2. The sin of the world, and the evil one himself, have all been judged already!

We are not awaiting a future time of difficulty, tribulation, and judgement from God as the necessary event before he can come. Yet, the Bible is full of warnings such as:

Galatians 5:15

"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!"

Sin can still hurt you. Bad decisions still hurt. Tribulations of all sorts are inevitable. But...

John 16:33

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

1 Thessalonians 5:9

"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. Lift our expectations from doom and gloom to glory and victory!

From a Biblical perspective we are in the last days. The apostles believed they were in the last days. And they were! Some things will get bad, that's why Paul said in the last days there will be perilous times. (See 2 Timothy 3:1) But when hasn't there been perilous times?

Paul is a realist. He's not predicting a period of time when for 3 1/2 years or 7 years sinful natured people will become more sinful. He's just saying that just because we are in the last days, don't suppose that everyone has the faith and that everything is now perfect. There is

more to come, so, don't freak out when you see some people acting like they don't know God. They don't. So intercede for them.

It's the church that sets the end times agenda not the evilness in the world.

2 Peter 3:12

"...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."

Some positive end times stuff...

Isaiah 2:2

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all
nations shall flow to it.*

Acts 2:17-18

*And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men
shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit
in those days; And they shall prophesy.*

So let's be thankful! Mark 13 shows us something specific in history. It reminds that there is real peril out there, but, we have a real Saviour who can and will save us spiritually and naturally, in every way. We have been appointed to salvation.

Thank you Jesus!