

**Hang In There**  
*Mark 13:5-13*  
Matthew Homan  
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**Introduction:**

- On October 1, 1932, in Game 3 of the World Series, Babe Ruth was at bat and made a gesture that appeared to some to be pointing towards the center field bleachers at Wrigley Field in Chicago. At the very next pitch, Ruth hit his final postseason homerun of his career right through center field.
- Mark 13 is a difficult chapter to understand. Last week we discussed how much of this chapter is interpreted by some Christians to be referring to future events at the end of the world. I explained that rather I believe we should understand this text as referring to events that were fulfilled in the generation of the disciples in the first century.
- In the final days with his disciples, Jesus points the bat. He tells his disciples that the temple is going to be destroyed. He tells his disciples in Mark 13:30, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” And all the things we will read about in Mark 13:1-30 do take place. The temple and Jerusalem are destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. Jesus hits a homerun right up centerfield just like he promised.
- You might ask, “Why does this text matter to me? I live in 2018. Why does it matter that Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and it came to pass in 70 AD?” It matters for lots of reasons. But here is one: it matters because the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem is a decisive moment where God has communicated to the world that what you are doing in church today is not apostasy. We are not an aberration of Judaism, but the fulfillment of Judaism. The temple in Jerusalem pointed to Jesus. And now Jesus the Messiah has come! We have the full movie! Why would we keep watching the trailer? We live not in the Old Covenant. We live in the New Covenant, the better covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

**Reading and Prayer – Mark 13:1-13**

**Various Signs of the Coming Destruction of Jerusalem (v.5-8)**

- Before we study the various signs, take note that Jesus says in verse 7 that these signs “must take place, but the end is not yet.” He also says that these signs are “but the beginning of the birth pains” in verse 8. So these first signs are not to communicate that the end is immediate, but that the end is on the horizon; it is coming—especially if you were like Leslie and in labor for 23 hours with Gracelynn. The birth of God’s destruction upon Jerusalem is coming, but it is not yet. And Jerusalem will have no epidural.
- It is easy enough to understand the analogy of labor pains. They start small and intensify until the baby is born. But could we also see an analogy of the church here? Yes, these are the signs of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but might this analogy imply that God is giving birth to new life? We know that the church began to gather in Acts 2 after Peter preached the sermon at Pentecost. We know from Acts that the church spread not only through Jerusalem and Samaria, but to the ends of the Roman Empire to

the Gentiles. But if there was ever any doubt that God's new holy nation (as 1 Peter 2:9 describes the church) was truly the church—a new people of God made up of all nations, God makes it abundantly clear to the majority of the Jews who rejected Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice, crucified him, and continued to make sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. God destroys the temple, putting his stamp of approval on the birth of the church in the first century! God is laying waste to one temple, while giving birth to a new temple.

- Here are the various signs:
  - Some will claim to be the Messiah and lead people astray (v.6). Literally in the Greek they claim to be, “I Am”, the name of God.
  - There will be wars and rumors of wars (v.7). These wars will mean a nation and kingdom rising up against one another (beg. of v.8).
  - Earthquakes (v.8)
  - Famines (v.8)
- Concerning the false Messiahs, Acts 5:36-37 describes such first century deceivers. It says, “For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered.”
- Concerning the wars:
  - The Bible tells us how hungry the Jews were to overthrow the Romans. After Jesus feeds the five thousand with miraculously multiplied bread, it says in John 6:15, “Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.”
  - Josephus, a first-century historian wrote about the tumultuous times for decades leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem between Israel and the Roman Empire. He wrote about the fears of war in 40 AD when the Emperor Caligula attempted to erect a statue to himself in the temple of Jerusalem. You can read the works of Josephus for free on the internet.
- Concerning earthquakes:
  - We know that there was an earthquake at the crucifixion of Jesus, when he breathed his last breath according to Matthew 27. This was the same moment that the temple's curtain tore in two. No doubt the disciples looked back and saw that the curtain tearing was a foreshadowing of the coming destruction.
  - Josephus also wrote about a great earthquake in 67 AD, during the Great Jewish Revolt, when the zealots of Jerusalem had rebelled against the Roman Empire and were fighting for Israel's independence. This earthquake happened when the Zealots had taken over the temple and cast out the high priest who they accused of being too friendly with the Romans. The very day of this earthquake, the high priest was slaughtered by the hands of the Zealots. Thousands were killed in the city and the outer courts of the temple flowed with blood. So in the midst of rebellion against Rome, the Jews were infighting. And in the midst of this deterioration of the temple grounds, there was an earthquake.
- Concerning famine, Acts 11:27-29 states, “Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit

that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.” Claudius was emperor of Rome from 41 to 54 AD.

- Yes, false messiahs, wars, earthquakes, and famine happen still today. And so those who interpret this text as foretelling a future event right before Jesus returns looks for these signs today. But if the text is really speaking about the signs of the coming destruction of the temple in the first century, the Bible and history confirm such signs occurring.
- Application:
  - See that no one leads you astray (v.5).
    - My father preached a sermon at a church in California one time and he was told that years before Jim Jones was a guest preacher at that same pulpit before he went off the deep end. That gave him an eerie feeling.
    - How can we ensure that we are not drinking the Kool-Aid of false teachers?
    - We should study the Bible by ourselves and in community. This includes the community of Christians that have gone on before us. If you hear something taught or you interpret a text, and you cannot find any Christians in history agreeing with you, you may want to rethink your position.
    - I encourage you to come on Wednesday nights as we continue studying false teachers in the Word Faith Movement. Do you have the discernment to listen to a teacher and know if he is telling the truth?
    - One reason I model expositional preaching (the style of preaching both Leslie and I had in our home churches, and what was taught to me at Liberty University and at Southeastern Seminary) is that it protects me and teaches you how to study the Bible in its context, not taking verses out of their context, butchering their meanings, and therefore misapplying the text. I’ve heard too many sermons where pastors’ preconceived ideas drive the sermon, not the Bible. See that no one leads us astray.
  - Do not be alarmed (v.7).
    - When you are shooting a gun, you do not flinch as much because you know you are about to pull the trigger. Jesus does not want his disciples to flinch when things get crazy before the destruction of the temple.
    - What has Jesus warned us about so that we are not alarmed in our lives? One that Christians are warned about often in the Bible is persecution. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Be prepared to be ridiculed for having a Bible study at the lunch table. Be prepared for your brother to ridicule you for your faith.
    - And don’t forget persecuted brother or sister that Jesus has promised us that he will return someday to commence his kingdom. Will you be alarmed at his coming or are longing for his coming? Christian, do not be alarmed at the craziness around you. Mayberry may not be coming back, but Jesus is! Hang in there! But unbelieving friend, you have every reason to be alarmed at the coming of Jesus. And you cannot press the snooze button on Jesus.

- Jesus has promised that he will say to some in the judgment, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (Matthew 7:23). There is no reason for any in this room to have a rude awakening. Jesus has made himself abundantly clear. Those that warm the pew with a heart of false conversion, those that do not bear fruit, those that unashamedly cling to sin, those that self-righteously try to earn God’s favor, will be cut off and thrown into the fire. There should be no surprises. Jesus has plainly delivered to us his message of grace and mercy. Yet some of us may still not have our glove ready in the center field stands.

### **The Spread of the Gospel through Persecution before the Coming Destruction of Jerusalem (v.9-13)**

- “But be on your guard” (v.9). The Greek word is the word for seeing or watching. Jesus is saying, “Watch out.”
- Jesus warns the disciples that they will be persecuted (v.9). Most persecution in the middle of the first century was from Jews, not the Romans, thus Jesus mentioning “synagogues” in verse 9. While Emperor Nero did persecute Christians, Roman persecution was not widespread until after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. It was after the temple was destroyed that the Romans realized that Christianity was not merely a sect of Judaism, but a separate religion, for they did not need the temple to worship and grow. Established religions were allowed to practice under Roman law, but new religions were not permitted.
- The text gives various examples of persecution: they will have to stand in court, be beaten in the Jewish places of worship called synagogues, and stand before governmental authorities. And this all takes place.
  - Paul stands before a Jewish council in Acts 23.
  - In Acts 14 Jews from a synagogue stoned Paul.
  - In Acts 24 Paul has to defend his faith before Governor Felix.
  - In Acts 26 Paul has to stand before King Agrippa.
- The text says there is a purpose in this first century persecution. Verse 9 says, “to bear witness before them.” It would be through persecution that the Gospel could reach the ears of some of the most important leaders throughout Judea and the Roman Empire. The parallel text Luke 21:13 says, “This will be your opportunity to bear witness.” Paul says in Philippians 1:13 that because of his imprisonment in Rome, the Gospel had reached the imperial guard. Persecution was spreading the Gospel.
- So in the context of persecution spreading the Gospel, verse 10 is given: “And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.” The parallel text in Matthew 24:14 states, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”
  - Some have interpreted this verse to be talking about when Jesus returns to the earth someday; all people groups must hear the Gospel before Jesus returns to consummate the kingdom. Now it is true that we are to go to all nations with the Gospel during this age of the church according to Matthew 28:19-20. But this verse in Mark 13 is not talking about the end of the world. It is talking about the first century.

- So what does this verse mean by saying that the Gospel will be proclaimed to all nations? It simply means that the Gospel is going to spread throughout the earth. It either is hyperbole, or speaking of the ends of the Roman Empire. It does not mean that the Gospel was given literally to all people groups such as the Native Americans in the unknown lands of America in the first century. Look at other verses in the New Testament that talk about the Gospel going to all nations in the first century:
  - Acts 2:5-6 – “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.” Jews from “every nation” were at Pentecost and heard the Gospel preached by Peter.
  - Romans 16:25-26 – “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations...” Paul speaks of all nations having been disclosed the Gospel though he just talks in Romans 15 about needing to go preach the Gospel in Spain.
  - Colossians 1:23 – “...not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven...” Paul speaks once again in universal terms about the Gospel being proclaimed.
- So this prophecy in Mark 13:10 about the Gospel going to the nations indeed can be fulfilled in the first century, before the “end” that Matthew 24 describes, which is the destruction of the temple.
- As the gospel is brought to the nations under persecution in the first century, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will give them the words to say (v.11). In the parallel text in Luke 21:15 it states, “for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.” This is not words from the Holy Spirit that will escape death, but words that will testify to the truth of the Gospel. Think of Stephen as he was stoned in Acts. In Acts 7:55-57 it states, “But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him.”
- And Jesus speaks of Christians being given to death in our text as well. Verse 12 talks about brothers delivering brothers to death, father his children, and children putting parents to death. This is reminiscent of Jesus in Matthew 10:34-36: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.” The truth of the Gospel will split of families. And Jesus is now explaining that the disciples and their contemporaries will have to experience such pain and persecution.
- Application: The Holy Spirit empowers us to be a witness for Jesus, to say exactly the right words, and yet we still can be rejected.
  - Jesus says, don’t worry. I’ll give you the words to say. But then he says many will be killed for being a Christian!

- This is one verse of many in the Bible that reminds us that success is faithfulness to Jesus...period. Even when we have the exact words from the Holy Spirit, we still may be stoned to death. No one reads about Stephen being stoned and says, “Well, if he would have just had better voice inflection...” The words we give from the Holy Spirit have the power to melt a heart, and in God’s mysterious sovereignty, they have the power to harden a heart. It is our responsibility to simply be led by the Holy Spirit and speak the powerful words of Scripture to others. Do not be anxious; trust God’s sovereign work through being a testimony of his perfect Word.
- Those that follow Jesus will be hated by all kinds of people (v.13). But yet those who endure to the end will be saved (end of v.13).
  - Many other verses talk about enduring:
    - Matthew 10:21-23: “Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against 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. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” Notice that they are called to endure to the end. What’s the end? When the Son of Man comes in judgment on Israel before the disciples even get to all of the towns of Israel with the Gospel of the Kingdom that are sent out to preach.
    - John 16:1-4: “I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.”
    - In the parable of the soils, the part about the rocky ground talks about endurance in Matthew 13:20-21: “As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.” Persecution will lead some to walk away from Jesus.
- Application: Perseverance in your faith.
  - Our confession of faith, the Baptist Faith & Message 1963 states the following: “All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end.”
  - Believing in perseverance is not merely that once you are saved, you will always be saved. It is that once you are truly saved, you will persevere and endure in growing in your faith and therefore producing fruit.
  - What is striking in our text is that those who persevere through great persecution would be saved. How worried we should be about members of Eureka Baptist Church who cannot even persevere through church attendance!
  - You may be a member of Eureka Baptist Church, but you are not a member of the one true Church of Jesus Christ if you do not persevere in your faith.

- Friends, I would rather the fallen among us hear it now than have to hear the words from Jesus later: “Depart from me. I never knew you.”

**Conclusion:**

- Like his disciples, Jesus has graciously warned us ahead of time. Hang in there Christian. Jesus is coming back. But woe to those who do not endure to the end. Let us pray.