

I Told You
Mark 13:14-23
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Introduction:

- A parent tells a child to put on a coat. The child refuses and plays outside without. The child comes in freezing. What does the parent say? I told you!
- And to any Christian that did not flee Jerusalem in 70 AD when the Romans came to destroy it, Jesus has said, “But I told you!”
- There is so much to observe in the text, our plan today is to simply understand the text, and then in our conclusion, we will make very brief points of application.
- Last week we read about the various signs of the coming destruction of the temple. Jesus said that these signs were just the beginning of birth pains.
- This week we are getting even closer to birth. The contractions have come and now it’s time to push. Next week the baby will be born.
- Review: Popular view today is the futurist perspective.
- Review: Verses 1-30 are on unit in the chapter referring back to verses 1-2 about destruction of the temple.

Reading and Prayer – Mark 13:1-31

The Timing of the Coming Destruction of Jerusalem (v.14-20)

- V.14 – “Abomination of desolation” – What is it?
 - “Abomination” is something that is detestable. “Desolation” means to be ruined.
 - Parallel text in Luke 21:20 – “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.”
 - So the abomination of desolation Luke makes plain for us is concerning the Romans coming into Jerusalem to destroy it and the temple.
 - Parallel text in Matthew 24:15 – “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)...”
 - Daniel 9:26-27 – “And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”
 - We are not going to discuss the significance of the weeks in Daniel 9; that would take too long to go through the different views. But Matthew refers to Daniel speaking of the destruction of the temple, and it is right here.
 - In verse 26, the anointed one shall be cut off, and that is speaking of Jesus dying on the cross.

- In verse 26, there is a prince who will send his people to destroy the city and the sanctuary—Jerusalem and the temple. The Roman general who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD was Titus, who was the son of the emperor of the Roman Empire, Vespasian.
 - This destruction will “come with a flood”, meaning it will be overwhelming.
 - “Desolations are decreed” ends verse 26. There is our word “desolation” just like in our texts in the New Testament. Devastation and ruin everywhere.
 - V.27 - “He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week” – There is a question as to who the “he” is referring to. Is it referring to the prince (Titus), or is it referring to the anointed one, Jesus? I believe it is referring to Jesus, but either way, whether it be Titus or Jesus, it is God who through his sovereignty, uses the Romans to “put an end to sacrifice and offering” in verse 27, the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.
 - Verse 27 ends using the words “abominations” and “desolate”; these words are repeated in our text under consideration—Mark 13.
 - So Luke tells us when the armies have surrounded the city, know that its desolation is near. Matthew tells us that the abomination of desolation involves standing in the holy place, which is the temple foremost, and by extension the city of the temple, Jerusalem. And our text in Mark states that the abomination of desolation stands where he should not be standing. With Daniel, and these three parallel texts in Mark, we can conclude that the desolation speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the hands of the Romans, by the ultimate hand of Jesus.
 - Jesus even laments in Matthew 23:38 about the temple being destroyed when he says, “See, your house is left to you desolate.”
 - We know historically that Titus entered the holy of holies and removed items as his prizes that he took back to Rome. When the armies are coming, when Titus is going into the temple, the time is upon them.
- “Let the reader understand” in middle of verse 14.
 - We are not completely sure why Mark inserted this parenthetical comment. Mark and Matthew have this phrase, and it is obviously telling readers to pay attention.
 - It probably is referring back to the book of Daniel, reminding the readers that the Bible has already referenced the abomination of desolation, and those readers who pay careful attention will understand what Jesus means in the Olivet Discourse.
 - Matthew was written to Jews, who should understand the Old Testament reference. Mark was written for Christians in Rome, and both Peter and Mark were ministering in Rome to help explain the Old Testament. But Luke does not include the phrase and just explains that the abomination of desolation is the Roman army surrounding the city of Jerusalem. Luke was writing to Theophilus, a Greek man who would have had little understanding of Daniel.
- The fleeing events:
 - At the end of v.14 of our text, Jesus says when you see the desolation events taking place, those in Judea should “flee to the mountains.” Get out of town! This is not going to end well for those who stay!

- V.15 – those on the housetop (common in middle-eastern culture; Abby has been a part of worship services on housetops in North Africa), should go down the side ladder/stairs and immediately flee without taking anything from the house. Like a fire! Don't take anything but yourself!
- V.16 – those workers in the field should flee without even grabbing their cloak
- V.17 – Alas for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Why? Because it will be more difficult to flee.
- V.18 – Hope that it does not happen in winter! Why? Because it is harder to travel in the cold, especially if there is snow, which Jerusalem and the surrounding mountains can occasionally get.
- Matthew 24:20 – Pray that it is not on the Sabbath! Why? Because shops are closed on the Sabbath. Gates out of the city are closed on the Sabbath. It would be harder to grab provisions and leave the city.
- “Such tribulation” in v.19
 - Matthew 24:21 states “great tribulation.” Many evangelicals hear the phrase “great tribulation” and think of a particular interpretation that became popular starting in 1910 in America with the publishing of the Scofield Reference Bible. It is a futurist interpretation, thinking most of Mark 13 is about the future not about the destruction of the temple. The popular teaching today teaches that there is a seven year tribulation before Jesus comes back to set up a millennial reign over Israel. The futurist may read Mark 13:24's mention of “tribulation” as Jesus returning at the end of a seven year tribulation in the future.
 - However the tribulation in this text makes no reference to seven years. In fact no mention of tribulation in the Bible makes reference to seven years.
 - Those that argue for a seven year tribulation sometime in the future point to Daniel 9, the prophecy about the 70 weeks that we quoted earlier, that mentions the abomination of desolation (but does not speak of tribulation). Let's read Daniel 9:27 again: “And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” Most futurists interpret this text to be talking about the antichrist ruling for that final week (seven years) and that for 3 ½ years (half of the week), he will stop the normal sacrificial offering of a future rebuilt temple. This is why there are Christians that are trying to help Jews rebuild a temple in Jerusalem today, thinking that they are helping usher in a fulfillment of prophecies in the Bible about a rebuilt temple. But why have a rebuilt temple if Christ is our temple?
 - Luke tells us in Luke 21 remember, that the abomination of desolation was about the armies surrounding Jerusalem and destroying it and the temple. Once again, if this section of Mark 13 is reference to a Great Tribulation in the future, then Jesus does not answer the disciples' question! The disciples ask in Mark 13:4 when will the destruction of the temple take place, and what will be its sign. And all of this will take place in the generation of the disciples (Mark 13:30).
 - So I would suggest to us that the great tribulation in our text is the time surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. And interestingly enough, as Daniel refers to the temple being put to an end for half a week (3.5 years), that is about

how long the Great Jewish Revolt, the war between the Romans and the Jews lasted! It began in 66 AD and ended in 70 AD.

- The tribulation's greatness: Mark 13:19 – “For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.”
 - Some will reason that this has to be a future apocalyptic tribulation because obviously there have been greater times of persecution for Jews than 70 AD. Look at the holocaust!
 - But Jesus is using common hyperbole as Hebrew prophets often do, especially when referring to war and destruction. Dr. Fowler at Liberty University refers to this as “elevated language.” You cannot read this like a western American that takes everything so literal. We must understand how the Bible communicates within its culture of writing. We use hyperbole today. When the mother says to her child, “Virginia, I’ve told you a thousand times to put away your laundry.” Even in the Middle East today, they still use such elevated language. When Saddam Hussein spoke of fighting America, he bombastically said that it would be the mother of all battles.
 - Old Testament examples of hyperbole:
 - Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:5) compared to Josiah (2 Kings 23:25). Both texts claim that there was no king like him before or after. This is not contradiction but hyperbole.
 - Ezekiel 5:8-9 – “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again.” But God does do it again, arguably even worse, in 70 AD, for the temple has still not been rebuilt!
 - So we should not read in Mark 13 that the tribulation will be the most catastrophic event to people in human history. Ummm...the flood of the whole world should fit that bill if we are talking numbers! We must read this text like a Jew, not an American. Jesus is simply saying that this tribulation that is coming at the destruction of the temple is going to be really, really, bad.
 - The parallel text Luke 21:24 tells us more about the destruction: “They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles...” Jesus tells his disciples that this great tribulation of the Romans’ destruction is coming! And surely it did. And surely the Jews were dispersed to the nations.
- “And if the Lord had not cut short the days...” (v.20)
 - Jesus says at the beginning of verse 20 that if the days of the tribulation were not shortened, then no human being would be left alive.
 - At the end he says for the sake of the elect—that is the Jews who lived in Jerusalem who were Christians, he shortened the tribulation.
 - So God shortened the days of the destruction of the temple in some way, so that the Christians could flee and be saved from the destruction.
 - Historically, the war started in 66 AD. The Roman General Vespasian invaded Israel and was headed towards Jerusalem. But in 68 AD, Emperor Nero

committed suicide but he had no children to succeed him. This caused a temporary upheaval of power in the Roman Empire. Three different men were assassinated as they claimed the throne. Eventually the Roman Senate elected Vespasian to be the new emperor. So he withdrew his siege of Jerusalem to return to Rome. Then he sent his son Titus to finish the siege and under Titus Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. In this window between Vespasian leaving and Titus returning, the Christians fled Jerusalem, so that when Titus came back, there were virtually no Christians left in the city to be killed. The days of the tribulation were shortened by this gap in the siege.

- Could it be that the Christians were already warned by Jesus in the Olivet discourse? I think so. “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies...flee to the mountains” (Luke 21:20-21), and they did just that!

No Messiah Will Save Jerusalem from Destruction (v.21-23)

- In the context of being commanded by Jesus to flee the city for it was going to be destroyed, Jesus tells the disciples to not believe any false Messiah, false Savior figures nor the false prophets.
- It does not tell us outright in the text, but it seems that the attraction to believe the false Messiah figures and the false prophets in the moment of the siege on Jerusalem would be to believe that these self-acclaimed Saviors would save Jerusalem from its impending destruction. Mark 13:21 says “And then...” The word “then” is linking Jesus’ statement with his previous comments about the coming destruction of Jerusalem.
- This happens in the Old Testament as well. In Jeremiah 28, a false prophet named Hananiah tells the exiles that they would return from Babylon in just two years. But Jeremiah corrects him and tells him that God will allow the people of Judah to suffer for a long time in exile, for 70 years. God kills Hananiah for his false prophecy. In the midst of God punishing his people, false prophets wanted to thwart God’s sovereign plan of discipline. The same is true of the warning of Jesus in our text. God wills to destroy Jerusalem and the temple. But false Christs and prophets will offer false hope of Jerusalem being saved.
- But God has already spoken. As verse 23 says, “I have told you all things beforehand.” Jesus is saying, “I told you!” True Christians will listen to Jesus. If it were possible to deceive the elect, these false Messiahs and prophets would have done it. But God graciously has taught Christians beforehand what is coming. Jesus predicted the destruction multiple times in the Gospels. He tells Christians to go into all the world with the Gospel. And through the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus has scattered Christians to the nations.

Conclusion: (Application Slide)

- Be watchful. The true sign of faith is watchfulness. 1st century Christians were told to watch. We are told to watch for when Jesus comes again. Are you eagerly waiting through the night for the master to return home and knock on the door?
- Contemplate God’s sovereignty. The same event that brought judgment to Jerusalem brought life to the nations. God is sovereign in this text. Contemplate the sovereignty of God as you sojourn through the trials and tribulations this week.

- Flee to God. No one can save us from God's wrath, except for God!
 - Here is a quote from Jim's prayer: "...there is no commitment more important than flight from that which evokes your wrath. We must go to the safety of the hills—the place which you have directed us. In a sense, Lord, we flee both from you and to you—from your judgment to your grace.”
 - Do you want to run away from God's wrath? Run to God! God, Man, Christ, Response.
 - Do you want to remain under God's wrath? Jesus will say to you, “I told you.”