

This week our country celebrates Thanksgiving. it is a time to reflect on all God has graciously provided for us. We live in a country where we are free from the persecution and suffering experienced by many believers around the world.

Pause for a moment to offer prayers of Thanksgiving. Allow your gratitude to guide you into your calling to share God's blessings with others. What are some of the opportunities you have be a blessing to others this week?

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, - Ephesians 1:18 NIV

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. - Romans 15:13 NIV

The hope we have is not for ourselves alone. It is for all of creation. While some may be in a season of celebration, others may be in a time of sorrow. As we gather to enjoy the abundance of God's blessing, there are those around the world who are suffering and persecuted. This holiday season let's balance gratitude with compassion for others who need the hope we have in Jesus.

WRAP-UP

Jesus warned His disciples that the Temple would soon be destroyed and that persecution was coming—not to signal the end of the world, but to prepare them for the trials they would soon face. Though the disciples asked for signs and timing, Jesus' message focused on vigilance, discernment, and trust in God amid deception and suffering. The early Church would see these warnings fulfilled, yet Jesus' vision emphasized transformation and hope, not despair. As believers today reflect on these teachings—and on God's enduring character—we respond with gratitude, awareness, and a calling to share His hope and compassion with others, especially in a world where many still endure hardship and persecution.

MEMORY VERSE

11 Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. - Mark 13:11 NIV

Challenge –

Read through some of the prophetic passages in Daniel and Isaiah. Ask God for understanding and the ability to trust Him as you await His answers.

Transformation Not Obliteration Gospel of Mark Ch. 13 - Week 1

INTRODUCTION

After Jesus' confrontation in the Temple courts, He had some difficult news to deliver to His followers. He prophesied about the coming destruction of the Temple and persecution of the Church. As Jesus had told them through His teaching, the Temple had become like a barren fig tree and was being replaced. In response to the disturbing news the disciples asked when it would happen. In this week's passage we see Jesus' response. Jesus' vision isn't about obliteration but transformation. He was telling them to watch out and prepare for persecution that they would soon face.

Ice Breaker

How have you prepared yourself to face natural disasters like fires or earthquakes?

Key Passages

3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?" - Mark 13:3-4 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What It's Not

2 "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." 3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?" - Mark 13:2-4 NIV

A little history lesson is in order. Forty years after Jesus spoke these words General Titus led the Roman army against Jerusalem, burning the city and destroying the temple. Its walls had been lined with massive plates of gold which the Romans looted along with other sacred artifacts. They utterly destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem and rebuilt it as a Roman colony.

What had the disciples asked about? How did Jesus respond?

The warning that follows in this passage was in response to the disciples' concerns and it would help to prepare them for the coming persecution. We find that there are patterns throughout the bible and throughout history that repeat themselves. The persecution and assault against God's people would certainly be among them. While we should recognize that our battle against the enemy, Satan, continues, we shouldn't take the specifics of this passage as a means of predicting the end of the world.

2. What It Is

*5 Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 6 Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many.
- Mark 13:5-6 NIV*

Jesus was preparing to depart this earth. He knew what lay ahead for his disciples and He was warning them. It was not unheard of in that day for people to claim to be the Messiah.

We don't often hear about people claiming to be the Messiah, but we do still have many who are deceiving believers. What are some of the "red flags" that might alert you that someone isn't what they claim to be? How do you go about discerning when someone is leading you in the wrong direction?

9 "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. 11 Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. 12 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 13 Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. - Mark 13:9-13 NIV

9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)--Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia--who began to argue with Stephen. 10 But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. - Acts 6:9-10 NIV

In the Book of Acts we read about the persecution of the early church. They were indeed arrested, tried and flogged.

How did Stephen's experience in Acts 6 confirm what Jesus said in Mark 13:11? What has been your experiences in sharing your faith? Are you worried about what to say around your Thanksgiving table? Have you ever

found yourself sharing in a way that you felt was directed by the Holy Spirit?

*55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."
- Acts 7:55-56 NIV*

Stephen stood firm to the end and did indeed see *the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory (Mark 13:26)*. We have the same Holy Spirit living in us, available to help us stand firm no matter what we may face in our lives.

After His warning about what they would face, Jesus quotes from Daniel and Isaiah (*Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11, Isaiah 13:10; 34:4*). Those passages are considered Apocalyptic literature which describe events surrounding His return to the judge the earth. You can find opinions about how to interpret such passages with very different viewpoints from well-known bible teachers.

If you are familiar with these passages, what have you read or been taught concerning them? The bible contains an abundance of prophetic writing. What questions do you have concerning what the bible says about end times?

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
- Proverbs 3:5 NIV*

We may have unanswered questions about end time events, but we have a God we can trust to provide the answers we need at the time we need them.

3. Why It Matters

There is a great deal of speculation concerning the end times. Jesus tells His disciples to "be on guard" several times in these verses. That phrase means to be aware and understand. We too want to be watchful and mindful of what God is doing today. But as we will find in our study of the verse which follows, not even Jesus Himself knows the day and hour the end will come. So, we won't focus on "when" these things will happen. Instead, we will focus on "who" God is and why that gives us hope.

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. - Titus 3:4-7 NIV

Hope for the Christian is not just wishful thinking. Hope is a confident expectation of a future event. What is our hope described in this passage? What are the characteristics of God upon which our hope is founded?