

Christ Community Covenant Church
The Passions of Christ: The Kingdom of God
Pastor Dave Scherrer - March 22, 2015

With our study of Mark chapter 13 this morning we are winding down our study of Mark's gospel recording the life of Jesus. We will be looking at one of the great apocalyptic passages of the Bible. It is found in something called the Olivet Discourse and I should stop here and kind of un-pack a couple of those words.

Apocalyptic— something never before seen or understood revealed, like a covered statue (Blue Horse)

Olivet— simply means **from or at the Mt. of Olives** as defined by theological scholars. The Olivet Discourse is simply the discourse that happened on the Mt. of Olives. The Olivet Discourse – is found in three accounts; Matthew 24 and, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21.

As Scott told us last week, all the public teaching is done with Jesus now. It is most likely Wednesday in the last week of our Savior's life on earth and as he retreats for the last time to the little neighborhood of Bethany (just outside of Jerusalem) for rest with his friends and family he stops somewhere on the Mt. of Olives just above the garden of Gethsemane. What is about to transpire by way of conversation is a bit like a deathbed discourse of the great Jewish traditions of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Joshua. The content is different than the upper room discourse found in John chapter 14-17, another set of famous last words, but it has a similar tenderness and urgency.

Jesus had been spending the last couple days at the temple in Jerusalem as he was no doubt weary of heart and soul. Then a disciple innocently comments on how majestic the temple building is and it sparks a conversation of 'ends times' teaching by Jesus. Let's look at it together . . .

13 ¹ As He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what great stones and what great buildings are here."

² Jesus answered him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."

³ 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 happen, and what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

What an amazing building- it's huge!! And it was an amazing sight (first picture is a drawing of the city looking from the Mt. of Olives)



Drawing of the temple mount and city from the Mt. of Olives



The temple mount from the east, from the Mt. of Olives



the temple mount and old City of David from the south



The temple itself, large and mysterious and glorious

The worst thing that could possibly be considered for the Jews would be the destruction of the temple. There is nothing to compare it to in the US. The closest is Washington DC being destroyed, but it is greater than that as that is merely political. The temple was the very spiritual soul of the nation of Israel. The temple was in some mysterious manner, the place where God lived in the Holy of Holies deep in the temple. So when Jesus made this fantastic claim, it had the disciple's attention. The destruction of the temple would be the end of life as known for the Jews. And Jesus predicted it and described how the temple would be utterly destroyed and then it was, of course, in the predicted lifetime of the disciples in 70 AD!

As a side note on end times there really are three different kind of "end times" . . .

1. There is the end of my physical life, so this a very individual kind of 'end times,
2. There is the final 'end of time' event ushered in by the second coming of Christ,
3. There is the event or tragedy that feels like the 'end of time', as though life cannot go on.

Jesus was answering the specific questions of the disciples on "When and how would these things happen?" and "What would be the warning signs?" and these had to do with the destruction of the temple that he had just predicted and even that would seem like the end of time.

Scholars talk about the wonder of this passage in that some of it was a prediction of things that would happen during the lifetime of the disciples (details concerning the destruction of the temple) and some of it is written in concert with passages from Genesis, Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, Daniel, and Revelation that speak to the end of things as we know it in this time and space called life as we know it (ushered in by the second coming of Christ).

Jesus describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the abomination that results in the desolation of the Jews in 70 AD. These would constitute a warning by Jesus that there would be a time soon to gather their Christian friends and get out to the mountains before all is lost (between 66 and 70 AD).

Let's read a bit of the apocalyptic discourse out loud . . .

¹⁴ "When you see the 'abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let him who is

on the housetop not go down or enter the house to take anything out of his house. ¹⁶ Let him who is in the field not turn back to take his garment. ¹⁷ But woe to women who are pregnant and to those who nurse in those days! ¹⁸ Pray that your escape may not be in winter. ¹⁹ For in those days there will be distress as has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created to this time, nor ever shall be. ²⁰ "Except the Lord shortened the days, no flesh would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. ²¹ Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there He is!' do not believe it. ²² For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³ But take heed. I have told you all things beforehand.

Then skip down a bit to verse 30;

³⁰ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things happen.

He was warning them and directing them; he was encouraging them and preparing them. Jesus was about to die and they would soon be thrust into deep fear and confusion. Then the resurrection and their emotions run from crazy confusion to screaming hope! Then the Savior would ascend and the Holy Spirit would descend and indwell them. This is going to be an amazing next two months!

Off the record: I have this sense that Mark was written to provide to circulate in the mid-60's AD as a reminder of the coming destruction of the temple predicted by Jesus (let the reader understand). That means as the tension mounts with the Romans in that decade, Mark would be remembering the warnings and his work would serve to give notice to the Christians in the city to flee when the abomination comes (perhaps in AD 66 surrounding of the city by the Gentile/Romans as atrocities performed then).

Now while this conversation answering their questions about the temple, Jesus wants them to understand that there is an even greater 'end time' before them and in the middle of this discourse Jesus breaks into a truly 'end of the earth' conversation. Jesus is also taking care of his friends by letting them know of this impending doom for the nation of Israel and a final judgment that awaits all humanity.

"On the whole, Jesus seems to be more interested in preparing his disciples for the future than he was in predicting it." *Grant Osborn, IVP Commentary on Mark*

There is one important and transcendent truth here that we must not miss – at the death of Jesus on the cross and the tearing of the veil in the temple and then with the coming of the Holy Spirit, ***God was making the temple obsolete!***

Making temples obsolete

With the coming of the Messiah and by His death on the cross, we remember according to Matthew 25 that the veil or curtain of the temple was torn in two just as Jesus cried out "It is finished." The word "veil" in Hebrew means a screen, divider or separator that hides. Essentially, it was shielding a holy God from sinful man. Whoever entered into the Holy of Holies was entering the very presence of God. In fact, anyone except the high priest who entered the Holy of Holies would die. Even the high priest, God's chosen mediator with His people, could only pass through the veil and enter this sacred dwelling once a year, on a prescribed day called the Day of Atonement.

The picture of the veil was that of a barrier between man and God, showing man that the holiness of God could not be trifled with. God's eyes are too pure to look on evil and He can tolerate no sin (Habakkuk 1:13). The veil was a barrier to make sure that man could not carelessly and irreverently enter into God's awesome presence.

The curtain was about 60 feet in height, 30 feet in width and four inches thick. Furthermore, it was torn from top down, meaning this act must have come from above.

As the veil was torn, the Holy of Holies was made open to all. God's presence was now accessible to everyone. Shocking as this may have been to the priests ministering in the temple that day, it is indeed good news to us as believers, because we know that Jesus' death has atoned for our sins and made us right before God. The torn veil illustrated Jesus' body broken for us, opening the way for us to come to God. As Jesus cried out "It is finished!" on the cross, He was indeed proclaiming that God's redemptive plan was now complete. The age of animal offerings was over. The ultimate offering had been sacrificed.

We can now boldly enter into God's presence, "the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf." (Hebrews 6:19-20)

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith." (Hebrews 10:19-22)

And Paul knew that now the temple of God in Jerusalem, once dwelled by God had been made obsolete.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Then in verses 24 and following Jesus slips into His final end times apocalyptic discourse and he describes the time when He will come again.

Mark 13:24-27

But in those days, after that distress,
'the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give her light;
²⁵ the stars of heaven will fall,
and the powers that are in heaven will be shaken,
²⁶ "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ Then He will send His angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of the earth to the farthest part of heaven.

And make no mistake, there are two certain things and only two certain things we know about the second coming. First is that it will happen. The second coming is literal, physical, historical and will be visible and there will be an absolutely touchable Risen King, That is very good Kingdom News. And the second thing we know is that we don't know when it will be so we should quit trying to predict it. Now we are to instead focus on the coming of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

God is making it known that he is breaking into the world in ways never before seen or even imagined. Indeed with the coming of Christ and the falling of the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom is already here. But Jesus is also saying that the final chapter will not be written until he comes again. So the Kingdom of God is now but not yet:

We can read about the now part in the psalms . . .

Psalms 103:19

The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

But we can also read about the not yet part in the prophets . . .

Zechariah 14:9

⁹ *And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.*

Mark 1:15

. . . with Jesus saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

So take heart! The end of the age is upon us! We don't know exactly when, but we do know that Jesus is coming and that God is in complete control.

'End Times' – Take heart: God is in complete control!

Every detail is known by the Father and He is slow to act in judgement so that all who are called according to His name can be saved. So that makes me want to ask you a question.

Are you saved? If not then these end times truly are the most fearful times you can imagine.

Illustration: Taking a timed test in school, "Time's over, put down you pencils." Sometimes, no matter how badly you want it to be different, time is over.

Invitational Prayer

Discussion questions

Jesus' conversation with the disciples was concerning the 'end times.' Have you heard this term before and if so what kind of images or thoughts does it bring out for you?

How about any feelings associated with the 'end times'? Do you dread the thought or look forward to it?

Dave talked about three kinds of end times,

1. There is the end of my physical life, so this a very individual kind of 'end times',
2. There is the final 'end of time' event ushered in by the second coming of Christ,
3. There is the event or tragedy that feels like the 'end of time', as though life cannot go on.

Have you thought about your own life and the fact that someday (perhaps soon – no guarantees!) you will die and be before God. Does this kind of meditation give you ideas about how you might live now? How so?

Have you thought about the final days and the Day of Judgment, especially as it relates to those you love who do not yet know Christ? What thoughts come with this reality?

Have you ever experienced one of those tragic events where it seems like life cannot go on? Yet life does go on . . . what are we to learn from this reality?

Dave made mention that the Holy Spirit is in us so that now we are the temple of God. Sacrifices are no longer needed as Christ is our 'once and for all' sacrifice. How does this reality of 'God in us' change our lives? How should it change our lives!?

Dave mentioned that the Kingdom of God has come and is here already, but in another way is not yet fully here. What do you think your role and purpose is in this time of the Kingdom breaking out? How is God asking you to be a Kingdom citizen until he comes?

There is a word found in 1 Corinthians 16:22, 'Maranatha.' ***The phrase **Our Lord, come!** (marana tha) is Aramaic rather than Greek, probably representing an early Jewish Christian prayer for the return of Jesus***

(cf. Rev. 22:20) It is additional evidence that at an early date followers of Jesus gave him a title that they used of God. This also reminds us that Christians should always be praying for Christ to return soon (ESV Study Bible notes).

Should we be praying "Come Lord Jesus, come soon"? Do you pray 'Maranatha'?