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Salvation's Plan

Mark 13:1-13

Starter for Ten:

Have you ever experienced a moment or a place that made you feel awe and wonder? What was it, and what impact did it have on you?

Overview of Mark 13

The best sourcebook to read to understand Mark 13 is the rest of the Bible!

Where are we in the life of Jesus? We're on Wednesday of Holy Week, and Jesus was crucified on the Friday, so it's at the end of stint of teaching in the Temple, We know this from where we read:

Mark 14:1 "1 After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread."

Jesus speaks a lot in Mark 13. But this is not His farewell discourse, like that in the Upper Room. Those are Jesus' final words before His death. He's not giving those, but he is aware he will be leaving them soon, and these are some of the last words he says to them. This passage in Mark, and I'm talking about the whole of Mark 13 for a moment, vv.1-37, the whole passage, is not really apocalyptic. I have included an article on what Apocalyptic is at the end of the handout, but to put it briefly:

It is not properly called an apocalyptic discourse because it does not involve: (1) an otherworldly mediator; (2) visions of heaven or otherworldly tours; (3) great quantities of apocalyptic verbiage or images or notions; (4) date setting. 1 Witherington, B., III (2001) *The Gospel of Mark: a socio-rhetorical commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 336

Holman Illustrated Bible Commentary (D. Jesus Predicts the Temple's Destruction (13:1-2))

13:1-37 This chapter is often called Jesus' Olivet Discourse (cp. Mt 24-25; Lk 21). The themes of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70 seem to be interwoven with the final tribulation and Jesus' return. Some interpreters assign all of Mk 13 to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Most believe Jesus used the earlier destruction to foreshadow the end times. Some

who hold this latter view assign verses 1–13 to the first-century events and verses 14–37 to earth's last days. Others assign verses 1–31 to the first century and verses 32–37 to the end times. Still others find an A1-B1-A2-B2 pattern and assign verses 1–13 and 28–31 to the first century and verses 14–27 and 32–37 to the end times.

I would say at this point that already before the end of v.13 we're in the tribulation. Ladd says this of Jesus' teaching on end-times:

Jesus has an indeterminate historical perspective in which he sees the historical judgment of Israel, the destruction of the temple, the scattering of the Jewish people, a mission of his disciples both to the Gentiles and to Israel, and probably the final repentance of Israel. This is supported by the Olivet Discourse in Mark 13. The first section of the Discourse contains two parts: the signs of the end (Mk. 13:5–23) and the events of the end (Mk. 13:24–27). The signs of the end include false messiahs, woes, persecution, worldwide evangelization, the desolating sacrilege, and the great tribulation. The disciples had asked, "What will be the sign when these things all are to be accomplished?" (Mk. 13:4).¹¹ Ladd, G.E. (1993) *A Theology of the New Testament*. Rev. ed. Edited by D.A. Hagner. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p. 201.

We will be touching on a lot of this in our section today. Mark 4 is the most similar chapter to Mark 13 with a similar amount of Jesus' words. They asked him there with the twelve to privately explain the sower. The emphasis in Mark 4 is on hearing. In Mark 13 we only get Jesus' inner circle (although note in Matthew and Luke it appears to be a larger group of disciples). The emphasis here is on watching! Why does Mark as author of the gospel put this long speech in here? Witherington points out:

Then too, the effect of this long speech is that it slows down the narrative time just before the final narration of passion events, which do not have the breathless pace of what went before. "Before the trial, death and resurrection the reader is called to a halt."¹⁶⁹ 1169 169 Voerster, p. 278.

1 Witherington, B., III (2001) *The Gospel of Mark: a socio-rhetorical commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 337.

Mark 13:1–2 "Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" 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.""

Strauss and Wessel: 'Even their exact location on the Temple Mount is disputed.'
Revised Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 9

The Roman historian Tacitus described the temple complex as a mountain of white marble adorned with gold, a "temple of immense wealth" (*History* V. 8). Its enormous stones mystified many, and the surrounding complex included sprawling courtyards, colonnaded courts, grand porches and balconies, covered walkways, and monumental stairs. Herod the great builder built it to impress the wealthiest and

most powerful rulers of the day, and he succeeded.¹¹ Bryant, R.A. (2009) "Exegetical Perspective on Mark 13:1–8," in Bartlett, D.L. and Taylor, B.B. (eds.) *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year B*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, p. 311.

'...the magnificence of the Jerusalem Temple in large part derived, of course, from this influx of wealth from all over the Jewish world....by first century CE most Jews thought it wrong to offer sacrifices in local temples or at local altars, believing instead that such cult should take place only in the place which had been divinely ordained....This unification of Temple ownership had been hard won and remained under threat even up to 70 CE.' Martin Goodman, *A History of Judaism*, 56

'The excavation of the Western Wall has uncovered many massive Herodian stones relatively untouched by the ravages of time. One stone has gained attention, owing to its enormous dimensions. It is more than 15 metres in length and 2.5 metres in height....estimations of its weight vary, ranging from 420 tons to 600 tons. This stone is especially remarkable because it is not set at the base but has been set on the second tier above the pavement.' Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary Mark 8-16*, 299

It doesn't say which disciple, anonymous - they address him Rabbi. 'See what manner of stones'. This is Herod's temple - he has been dead for 35 years, building the temple as an ongoing project and it's still going. People would flock to see it.

From a distance, Josephus, the Jewish historian, said it looked like a snowcapped mountain glistening in the sun - the temple itself was covered with gold and when the sun caught it it was dazzling. The Temple Mount was an enormous platform, high up, the size of the courts was vast, could easily hold tens of thousands of people. We marvel at how the pyramids were constructed, or Stonehenge - It's not surprising that the disciples were playing the tourist and marvelling at the size of this temple.

The main work of reconstruction was completed within Herod's lifetime, but the final details were not completed until AD 63, only seven years before its destruction.

Herod's rebuilt Temple complex exhibited a combination of Jewish, Near Eastern, Hellenistic, and Roman influences. The spatial organization of the naos itself reflected priestly descriptions of the Tabernacle (Exod 25–30, 35–39). The placement of a sanctuary within a temenos was typical of temples in the Hellenized East, though not the Roman West, but the sheer size of the Herodian temenos separated it from other contemporary examples. The massive complex was the largest in the Roman Empire and one of the biggest anywhere in the ancient world. Its extensive use of columns reflected a Roman appropriation of an earlier Hellenistic architectural motif, with a distinctively Roman influence most strikingly apparent in the basilical shape of the Royal Portico. Thus, while the newly renovated Temple remained an expression of local Jewish culture, it also brought Rome right to the center of Jerusalem. The most sacred site in Judaism was now decorated with Roman

architecture. Meyers, E.M. and Chancey, M.A. (2012) *Alexander to Constantine: Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*. Edited by J.J. Collins. New Haven; London: Yale University Press (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library), p. iii.

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.""

v.2 is the killer statement by Jesus here. The moment at which the disciples are thrown. **Jesus is saying this publicly** - he is in the Temple precincts and could be overheard. This is important - he says this temple will be destroyed.

There are OT predictions about the destruction of the temple. I thought this one is particularly suggestive, as although Jesus doesn't mention it, in AD70 the Temple is burnt with fire:

Zechariah 11:1 "1 Open your doors, O Lebanon, That fire may devour your cedars."

This verse was quoted by a 1st century Jew prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem

Other predictions by Jesus:

- destruction of the ruling priestly establishment, Mark 12
- perpetual remembrance of unnamed woman's act of devotion, Mark 14.9
- His betrayal Mark 14.17-21
- His disciples' defection and Peter's denials, Mark 14.26-31
- His death and resurrection, several times.

How Herod moved the stones into their precise location is a marvel for civil engineers even today. Max Schwartz has written a book to try to explain how they did it, and he notes that "even with modern computers and technology, it would take great expertise to carve and fit these stone blocks so accurately." Of the largest stones, Netzer writes, "I wonder if any reasonable explanation can be given for this phenomenon, as well as how such stones were quarried and transported." Bolen, T. (2016) "Magnificent Stones and Wonderful Buildings of the Temple Complex," in Beitzel, B.J. and Lyle, K.A. (eds.) *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press (Lexham Geographic Commentary), p. 466.

In Roger Price's series of talks, *Fulfilled Prophecies*, he shows that this prophecy was literally fulfilled. The gold over the temple - it was set on fire as Zealots were standing on the roof of the Temple. Titus never ordered this, but the Temple was burnt down. Josephus describes it in detail in his account, *The Jewish War, Books 4-6*. The gold went into the mortar between the bricks, and afterwards the plunderers, looking for loot, dismantled all the stones to get the gold out. When Jesus says not one stone will remain, he is most likely referring to the Temple itself, not the Temple Mount and its walls, which includes the remaining 'Wailing Wall'.

So with this prediction:

...Jesus makes it evident that the temple will be no more. Its restoration and with it the restoration of Davidic glory is not the end, the *telos*, God's goal for the world. That goal is now wrapped up in the coming of the Son of Man in glory (Mark 13:26–27).¹¹ Peery, P. (2009) "Homiletical Perspective on Mark 13:1–8," in Bartlett, D.L. and Taylor, B.B. (eds.) *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year B*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, p. 313.

He looks with pity upon the ruin of precious souls, and weeps over them, but we do not find him look with pity upon the ruin of a fine house. ¹¹ Henry, M. and Scott, T. (1997) *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, p. Mk 13:1.

If Mark wrote this material around A.D 68–69, one can only imagine the effect of the events in 70 on those who knew this Gospel. It would have confirmed to the audience that this was a book of true prophecy Witherington, B., III (2001) *The Gospel of Mark: a socio-rhetorical commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 342.

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?""

'the spot where the ensuing conversation took place commanded a view of the Temple from the Kedron Valley. It was from the Mount of Olives that the full grandeur of the Temple could best be seen.' Cranfield, *Mark*

Ezekiel foresaw the departure of God's glory from the temple to the Mount of Olives" Bryant, R.A. (2009) "Exegetical Perspective on Mark 13:1–8," in Bartlett, D.L. and Taylor, B.B. (eds.) *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year B*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, p. 313.

It's a really important location in the Bible. This is a great picture of Jesus giving his disciples a bird's eye view, a mountaintop view of the future, helpful to see that Jesus shares this overlooking Jerusalem, the scene of the AD70 destruction and future prophecies. But the Mount of Olives is also where Jesus is going to return, and it will be split in two at Jesus' second coming, when he puts his feet on the Mount as is predicted in

Zechariah 14:4 "And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south."

What have you heard or been taught about the Second Coming of Christ?

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| Are you ready for Christ to return today? If you knew he were going to return

within twenty-four hours, what situations or relationships would you want to straighten out before he returned? Do you think that the command to “be ready” means that you should attempt to straighten out those things now, even if you think it unlikely that he would return today? Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Second Edition) (Questions for Personal Application > Chapter 54: The Return of Christ: When and How?)

The disciples ask two questions: when will these things happen, and what will the signs of the end of the age be? The Temple being destroyed is closely associated with the end of the world, in the minds of the disciples. Jesus goes to answer these questions in the whole of the rest of the chapter. WHEN will these things be - Jesus parks that till much later on, that's possibly even Grace who looks at that in the last section of the chapter, and then What will be the sign? What should we be looking for to tell us?

They want an 'infallible means of recognizing the approach of the End; they want in fact to be relieved from having to 'Watch'. But instead of a single sign Jesus gives them a baffling multiplicity of signs'. Cranfield, *Mark*

As part of this chapter, Jesus gives two very important qualifications to the information he is giving later on:

Mark 13:32–33 “32 “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.”

In other words, he cannot tell them precisely when (by the way, this is the only gospel in which it explicitly says that Jesus DOESN'T know when He will return), and neither should the disciples - or us for that matter - attempt to predict the date.

As David Garland says, he might not tell them what they WANT to hear:

But he does give them *what they need*: instructions on how to discern the signs of the times so they will not be disheartened by persecution, panicked by wars, fooled by appearances, or led to apostasy by false prophets during uncertain and trying days. They need discernment to distinguish between what has to do with the end of their own little worlds and what has to do with the end of the world.¹¹ Garland, D.E. (1996) *Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House (The NIV Application Commentary), p. 491.

'As our faith recognizes the signs as they occur, we are again and again put in remembrance of our Hope, and our gaze, that is so easily distracted from the Lord who is coming to us, is again and again directed back to Him.' Cranfield, *Mark*

Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Second Edition) (a. “Any Time” Return Is Impossible)

But the signs are never given to make us think, “Jesus couldn't come for a few years.” Jesus did not say anything like, “When you do not see these signs, you will know that I will not return very soon.” There is no indication that Jesus gave these

signs in order to provide Christians with a reason not to be ready for his return or in order to encourage them not to expect that he could come at any time! (Wayne Grudem)

Mark 13:5–6 “And Jesus, answering them, began to say: “Take heed that no one deceives you. 6 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many.”

The next section: It’s worth identifying what time period we’re talking about here. Jesus is speaking to them: is he speaking to all Christians, just the Jews, or the disciples about their lifetime? Jesus is referring to rumours of His coming here.

Where it says: take heed that no one deceives you - this is a common warning in the NT. Watch out is repeated several times in this chapter:

Mark 13:37 “And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Should we be watching? Yes, we should. v.37 uses another Greek word which means ‘be vigilant’.

He warns that they must “watch,” though this command does not mean simply to “be on your guard.” The word *blepo* in Mark calls for “discernment concerning realities which lie beyond the observations of the physical senses.”⁸ 18 8 Geddert, *Watchwords*, 60, 146.

The whole of this passage has an immediate relevant warning to Jesus’ disciples and also an ongoing warning to the church.

Some would say this is only aimed at the Jews - personally I believe all scripture is God-breathed and useful.

Mark 13:37 “And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Notice it’s aimed at everyone. Jesus knows this is going to be listened to. It’s not so much they have to get their heads round a particular timetable, but to be carefully prepared, to be discerning. Discernment of spirits is listed in 1 Cor 12 as a gift that we can move in.

Mark 13:6 “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many.”

Acting in the name of Jesus: there’s no documented example of that in 1st century - claiming to be the Messiah perhaps, as we have recorded in Acts. Politics and religion were often closely connected - the disciples were waiting for Jesus to do something political, but as he said ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ We don’t know enough about the first century - a fascinating period of time - R.T. France in his NIGTC Mark commentary says: ‘Josephus didn’t use the word *christos* much and didn’t record messianic claims’. This does not mean to say that messianic claims weren’t being made.

Mark 13:7–8 “But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for

such things must happen, but the end is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."

Hagner: 'The horror and human suffering connected with war are bound to raise eschatological thoughts -and they have indeed throughout history.' Matthew 14-28, WBC, 691.

These things have always happened and always will. This has only intensified, with increases in technology and globalization, war has become inescapable, it comes right into our living rooms. But, beloved, the end is not yet. I would suggest this still applies. Such things must happen, do not be troubled. Do we notice that? 'Do not let your hearts be troubled!' All sorts of upheavals go on, and Jesus says - don't be troubled by it.

Mark 13:8 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."

'The beginning of travail marked the end of the disgrace that rested on the childless woman, the approaching fulfilment of her strongest desire.' Cranfield, *Mark*

The word used (*ōdines*) means "woes" and is used in the Old Testament of the pains of birth (Isa. 26:17). The Old Testament speaks of the birth of a nation through a period of woes (Isa. 66:8; Jer. 22:23; Hos. 13:13; Mic. 4:9f.), and from these verses there arose in Judaism the idea that the messianic Kingdom must emerge from a period of suffering that was called the messianic woes or "the birth pangs of the Messiah." 1 Ladd, G.E. (1993) *A Theology of the New Testament*. Rev. ed. Edited by D.A. Hagner. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp. 201–202.

It feels as if Jesus gets ahead of himself and then comes back - it's confusing - but I would say the reason Jesus is doing this is he is holding two things in tension: the end of the ages, His second coming and all the associated events, with how they should be in the coming days. He's saying don't be fearful.

Roger Price handles it very well in his 'Fulfilled Prophecy' series when he explains that the purpose of prophecy is to inspire faith and hope -

Faith can also be defined as an assurance in the soul, believing today in the goodness and faithfulness of God. Hope involves assurance about what is going to take place. It can be defined as confident anticipation or expectation of experiencing God's goodness in the future. Hope finds expression in endurance under trial, and waiting for the coming of Christ. Both faith and hope involve seeing beyond what is seen with the eyes, and looking to God: trusting in His goodness and faithfulness. [BBS30 rogerprice.org.uk/basicbiblestudies/#series3](https://www.bbs30.rogerprice.org.uk/basicbiblestudies/#series3)

Mark 13:9 "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them."

Now this has a soon fulfilment which we see partially in the book of Acts, and a later fulfilment possibly during the tribulation. Although the word doesn't appear in my section, some of these references are referring to it. 'affliction' or suffering is all the word tribulation means. It does not always mean 'seven years'.

Noun: θλίψις (*thlipsis*), GK 2568 (S 2347), 45×. *thlipsis* is a cognate form of the verb *thlibō* (see *persecute*). It denotes the results of being squeezed or put into a narrow place—hence, "trouble, affliction, distress." It is used in several ways in the NT. See *trouble*. 1 Mounce, W.D. (2006) *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

One of the meanings is as follows:

(2) It signifies the end-time tribulation prophesied for the church. Quoting Dan. 12:1, Jesus designates the great "tribulation" as a sign of the end of the age (Mt. 24:21) and a precursor to great cosmological changes and the coming of the Son of Man (Mk. 13:24). The great multitude of Rev. 7:14 is made of those "who come out of the great *tribulation*, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." *Mounce*

Matt 24 on this point

Matthew 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake."

There we get the word 'tribulation'. There are some omissions in Mark 13 - for example the rapture - but

Mark 13:19 "For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be."

Mark 13:10 "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations."

There is a school of thought that says Jesus will not come again until the gospel is preached to all nations. In fact there's nothing wrong with this on one level - he wants everyone to be saved. Many will be. We also know the Bible needs to be translated into each language, and that's ongoing. 'nations' really indicates the Gentiles, and it's almost impossible, as humans, to say that has happened.

Matthew's verse is perhaps helpful here:

Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Mark 13:11 "But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit."

The Message rendering of Luke 21.15 says this: I'll give you the words and wisdom that will reduce all your accusers to stammers and stutters. Peterson, E.H. (2005) *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language*.

'Jesus promises them strength and resources beyond their own through the Holy Spirit.' W&S

This is a warning. It's clear in Matt that some (Jews) will be killed.

Matthew 24: "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake."

Jesus is being very straight with his disciples - and he is also speaking of what he is about to face:

Mark 8:34 "When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Just a little warning here: this would be bad exegesis to use this verse to argue you don't have to prepare if you do a talk. It's those unprepared, unpredictable moments where you're required to testify, the H.S. will inspire your words.

Mark 13:12–13 "Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

Matthew 10:34–37 "34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Mark 13:13 " And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

The final verse: 'hated by all'. This is a helpful warning that persecution should be coming our way as we try to follow Jesus. If we're not being persecuted, are we compromising somehow? It doesn't mean we go out looking for fights. There are plenty of battles to be fought in this land at the moment, when we hear what God is calling us to do we must stand up.

Tacitus's account of how Nero tried to pin the guilt for the devastating fire in Rome on the Christians describes them as "a class hated for their abominations ... by the populace."¹⁶ 116 16 Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.2, 4.

You can belong to all sorts of weird religious groups today and not suffer much opposition from family and friends, but the minute you bring the name of Jesus into the picture, and share the Gospel, somebody will start to oppose you. His name is still hated.¹¹ Wiersbe, W.W. (1996) *The Bible exposition commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, p. 156.

'He who endures to the end.' Not saved for eternity, but rescued. There are

differences of opinion which time period this is referring to. This section is a little bit confusing, as much of it is talking about the first generation of Christians. But some of it, you could argue, is still widely applicable now, or in the future. The only very specific verse is Mark 13.9. So this applies to the persecuted church, but also to the tribulation.

Jesus was not claiming here that salvation is by works, because he had already taught that it is by grace (cf. 10:15). He was simply arguing that genuine faith evidences itself in persistence through even the worst of trials. Biblical Studies Press (2019) *The NET Bible*. Second Edition. Denmark: Thomas Nelson.

Enduring to the end might mean survival (cf. * 4 Ezra 6:25), but more likely means avoiding apostasy, which was often associated with end-time sufferings.^{1* *}
Indicates names and terms found in the glossary

1 Keener, C.S. (2014) *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Second Edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, pp. 162–163.

How do we know these verses are referring to the tribulation? Look at the next verse:

Mark 13:14 ""So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

The other interpretation would say, that if you look on, you can see the fact v.14 says 'So' - without treading on Martin's toes - implies that it's the *end* of the tribulation.

This is tricky. It makes more sense to say it isn't, as Jesus is addressing his disciples, who are not going through the tribulation - hence many believe it's talking about the build-up to the Jewish War (AD 66-70). The tribulation has not been explicitly referred to yet, although it is in the Matthew parallel. But v.14 leaps to 3.5 years through the tribulation to what is known as the 'Great Tribulation'.

R.T. France says that 'telos' does not mean a particular end, but whatever comes against you you need to endure. To the end of your days. Some would interpret, as the end of the tribulation.

2 Timothy 2:12 "12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us."

The persecuted church would be so encouraged by reading this passage.

This is why it's problematic - it's not sequenced very well here - there ought to be the rapture here somewhere. Jesus is talking about the disciples as if they're still here. They still seem to be here in the middle of the tribulation. I don't have an answer to that unless we conclude that the Church DOES go through the tribulation, or part of it. Dispensationalists (pre-tribbers - very similar thing) might say that all these instructions are strictly for Jews, in the tribulation, and not for Christians. The

majority of us feel that we don't go through it (if we have actually looked at it, that is!). One common argument, which I used to find persuasive, is that why are Christians so keen to escape persecution, the suffering, that we are clearly called to as disciples - alongside the view that the rapture is a very recent teaching in church history.

It's worth remembering, though, that none of us will escape the 'judgment' of God, although as believers we will escape His wrath:

The Rapture is no mere "escape." Believers will forever be with the Lord. But all without exception will be subject to judgment when brought into His presence God's judgment seat, or throne, is also called the judgment seat of Christ. There each one will "receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. No secret thing can be hidden. Everything will be judged: our words, our acts, our motives, our attitudes, and our character. Of these, our motives (especially love) and our faithfulness seem to be the most important. They can make the difference between whether our deeds are judged as "gold, silver, costly stones" or "wood, hay or straw". Horton, S.M. (ed.) (2007) *Systematic Theology: Revised Edition*. Springfield, MO: Logion Press, p. 632.

Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Second Edition) (b. "Any Time" Return Is Possible) Grudem, p.1353

... the New Testament talks about two distinct returns of Christ, or two second comings of Christ,¹³ that is, a secret coming at which Christ takes Christians out of the world (a coming "for his saints"), and then, after seven years of tribulation have occurred on the earth, a visible, public, triumphant coming (a coming "with his saints") in which Christ comes to reign over the earth. During the seven-year interval all the signs that have not yet been fulfilled (the great tribulation, the false prophets with signs and wonders, the antichrist, the salvation of Israel, and the signs in the heavens) will be fulfilled, so that there is no tension at all between waiting for a coming that could occur "at any moment" and realizing that a later coming will be preceded by many signs.¹⁴

How can we seek to remain spiritually alert and prepared in our daily lives, based on what Jesus teaches in this passage?

Let us learn from our Lord's opening prediction to be moderate in our expectations. Nothing has created so much disappointment in the Church of Christ, as the extravagant expectations in which many of its members have indulged. Let us not be carried away by the common idea, that the world will be converted before the Lord Jesus returns, and the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord. It will not be so. There is nothing in Scripture to justify such expectations. Ryle, J.C. (1859) *Expository Thoughts on Mark*. London: William Hunt, p. 276.

The Markan scholar Lamar Williamson reminds us that every Gospel writer leaves the

church with a challenge. John calls the church to love one another. Matthew and Luke call the church to engage in mission to the Gentiles, to those who are "other." These are daunting challenges. But perhaps the most daunting challenge for Christians in the North American context, so set on instant gratification, is this one left for us by Mark: "Beware, ... keep awake," watch, resist, hold out for the coming of Son of Man. Lamar Williamson Jr., *Mark*, Interpretation Series (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 238.