

Mark 13 • The True “End Times” Christian

Introduction

There’s an entire section of your local Christian bookstore devoted to the “End Times”. Let’s be brave and take Jesus at His Word and believe Him literally. What does this passage say to you when you take it just as Jesus has said it, in the order He’s said it?

¹As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”

²And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”

³As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, ⁴“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”

[Read v.1-4]

Q: Let’s start out with a hard question: What do the disciples’ questions reveal about OLD Testament prophecy?

A: They **knew** to ask such a question! It shows an understanding of the prophetic teachings of the likes of Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, et al through whom God gave not just the specific events but the signs leading up to them in order to provide time for repentance and returning to God. They understood how to interpret Old Testament prophecy and understood its context.

Q: They’re actually asking Jesus two questions. What is the first?

A: “...when will these things be...” (v.4) They’re asking for the specific date and time. It’s important to note that this is succinctly answered in v.32, “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

Q: What’s the second question?

A: “...and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?” The teaching from here to v.32 will focus on answering this part of the question, not providing a specific date but the signs indicating “The Date” is very near.

Note: The word “sign” in verses 4 and 22 is a special phrase that literally means “attesting miracle”. It’s something akin to a miracle so great that it can’t be mistaken for anything but proof that God Himself is with the person through whom the sign is performed. (Something like Moses parting the Red Sea.)

Application: Up until this time, this word has not been used by the disciples but by those who opposed Jesus, demanding a sign – or “attesting miracle” from God – to prove His authority. It’s important to note that for the first time Jesus doesn’t rebuke someone asking about “attesting miracles” – they **will** accompany the End Times. However, note in v.22 that not all “attesting miracles” will come from God!

⁵And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. ⁶Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He!’ and will mislead many.

[Read v.5-6]

Q: What is probably the most important “attesting miracle” that Jesus begins with?

A: Deception.

Q: What kind of deception? Moral? Legal? What specifically?

A: Not just coming in the name of Jesus, but actually proclaiming to be Him.

Q: What will they achieve? What is their goal?

A: To mislead **MANY**.

Q: Why would they use such a tactic?

A: Although the End Times are accompanied by tremendous physical signs, destruction, etc., those actions don’t guarantee success where it actually counts: In the spiritual realm. Deception is the only way to attack **BOTH** believers and non-believers by preventing both from worshiping the One True God.

Q: So...WHO is responsible for not being misled?

A: We are.

Note: *If you study the teachings of Jesus and His Apostles in the New Testament you will discover that – like this passage – they spend far more time warning about the coming deception and apostasy than anything else.*

⁷When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. ⁸For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

[Read v.7-8]

Q: What is being taught by calling these initial signs “...merely the beginning of birth pangs”?

A: A woman’s contractions can go on for awhile – they don’t necessarily mean the baby will be born this very minute – but they won’t go on forever; birth is imminent.

⁹“But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. ¹²Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

[Read v.9-13]

Q: Look at the verbs and list the things that will happen to Christ’s followers as “attesting miracles” that Christ’s return is imminent:

- Delivered to the courts (v.9)
- Flogged in the synagogues (v.9)
- Brought before leaders to testify about Christ (v.9)
- Preach the gospel (v.10)
- Arrested and handed over (v.11)
- Betrayed (v.12)
- Hated (v.13)

Q. What are the 3 specific commandments we’re given in this passage?

- “...be on your guard...” (v.9) We should not be taken by surprised when this persecution comes to us.
- “...do not worry beforehand about what you are to say...” (v.11) We are to be Spirit-led.
- “...the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.” (v.13) We will not escape these things but must **endure** them; it’s part of a Christian’s End Times “job description”, so to speak.

Observation: Note that the overriding activity during the End Times as far as Christians are concerned is preaching the Gospel, whether to all the nations or to those before whom they're brought.

¹⁴“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁵The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; ¹⁶and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat.

[Read v.14-16]

Q: What is the obvious difference between this sign and the ones previously presented by Jesus?

A: Up until now, Believers are to stand their ground and continue preaching the Gospel and basically not react to the signs; this one elicits our reaction.

Q: What exactly is the “ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION”?

A: This originates from Daniel 11:31, “Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifices. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.”

It's one of the key “attesting miracles” as to the identity of the antichrist who will go into the temple in Jerusalem and erect an idol – or “abomination” – to another god. It's a despicable use of the temple during a time of great trouble.

Q: Hasn't this already happened?

A: While it's true that idols/false sacrifices occurred at the hands of the Greek ruler of Syria and twice by different Roman leaders, it's important to note that not **ALL** of the criteria were fulfilled. It's deception to believe that something that “mostly” fulfills the requirements is the actual thing. God's standard for His Word through His prophets is 100% fulfillment – not “mostly.”

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”
(2 Th. 2:3-4)

¹⁷“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ¹⁸But pray that it may not happen in the winter. ¹⁹For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. ²⁰Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

[Read v.17-20]

Q: Up until the Abomination of Desecration we were being shown “birth pangs”. What does the Abomination of Desecration seem to kick off here?

A: The Tribulation.

Q: For whom will God shorten the Tribulation?

A: The “elect”. This can be translated literally as “God's chosen ones.”

²¹“And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, He is there’; do not believe him; ²²for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

[Read v.21-23]

Q: In the midst of the Great Tribulation, what continues as a sign for us?

A: More deception.

Q: Who will provide “attesting miracles” according to v.22?

A: False Christs and false prophets.

Q: What is the goal of these false “attesting miracles”?

A: “...in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.” (v.22) It’s still all about spiritual warfare, particularly against Believers.

Q: What does “if possible” mean?

A: **IT WON’T BE POSSIBLE** to deceive the elect who are aware, on their guard, heeding Christ’s warnings of these activities.

²⁴“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

[Read v.24-27]

Q: When do these signs occur – when is Christ’s return effected? When are the elect gathered from the earth to Him?

A: **AFTER** the Great Tribulation.

Comment: *This sequence of events is something you should keep coming back to as you study Revelation.*

²⁸“Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. ³⁰Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³²But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

[Read v.28-32]

Q: Jesus now answers the first part of their question posed in v.4, “...when will these things be...” What is His answer?

A: No one knows the specific day or hour – we’re only allowed to know the “birth pangs” and to know it is imminent.

³³“Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. ³⁴It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. ³⁵Therefore, be on the alert – for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning – ³⁶in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”

[Read v.33-37]

Q: What is the key word in this passage?

- “...keep on the **alert...**” (v.33)
- “...stay on the **alert...**” (v.34)
- “...be on the **alert...**” (v.35)
- “...Be on the **alert!**” (v.37)

Q: In other words, Jesus is not providing a puzzle to be solved or an equation to be worked. What is the standard Jesus is setting for the “End Times Christian”?

A: It’s not a test of knowledge but faith. Facts and figures concerning prophecy is not the requirement but faith, obedience, and the willingness to share the Gospel through every circumstance.

Q: Who will endure the End Times?

A: The personally obedient.