

1. Meet Jesus as He breaks the news

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Date: 01 July 2009

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[0 : 0 0] Mark's Gospel, chapter 13, and we'll read from verse 1 to verse 13. And as he came out of the temple, one of the, that's Jesus of course, one of the disciples said to him, look teacher, what wonderful stones and wonderful buildings. And Jesus said to him, do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?

And Jesus began to say to them, see that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name saying, I am he, and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines. These are but the beginnings of the birth pains. But be on your guard, for they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour.

For it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death. And father his child and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.

And you will be hated by all for my name's sake, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. So, if you'd just like to look at the first few words of that passage, you'll see there that we're at the end of a section. Jesus has been in the temple in Jerusalem. Just have a look at the end of the section there. Can you see? Chapter 13 and verse 1. And as he came out of the temple, do you see that? Jesus entered the temple in chapter 11 and verse 11. And soon he was causing havoc.

Do you remember what he was doing? Overturning the tables, for example, was one thing that he was doing with all the corrupt money changers. He was confronting the establishment. Just turn back with me and have a look at chapter 11 and verses 17 and 18. And he was teaching them and saying to them, is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you, what have you done? You've made it a den of robbers. And the chief priests and the scribes, that's the institution, isn't it? They heard it and were seeking a way, what? To kill him. Look at that, to destroy him. For they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.

[3 : 2 1] So the Jewish establishment, what do they want? They want him dead. But the disciples, well, the disciples have realised that he's Jesus, he's the Messiah, and he's inaugurating his kingdom.

They've worked out that their carpenter friend is the Christ, the one promised in the Old Testament. Are you with me? And it's like their disciples are sort of riding the wave of God's unfolding purposes. But even, even to them, the magnitude of what was happening, well, it hadn't properly fallen into place in their thinking. Are you with me? We're thinking about the disciples. They've not quite grasped the scale of it all. They're a bit slow on the uptake, actually. I think they are. They're sort of, listen, they've sort of got his identity right, but not his role. Are you with me? They weren't quite sure what was going on. And they make this comment, don't they, in verse 1. Have you ever said something that's a little bit daft? I do it quite regularly. You know, you sort of lost the plot with something, and you're managing to get by, but then you suddenly make some comment, and it reveals everything, doesn't it? Is it called a Freudian slip? I think that's what they call it. And that's what's going on here. I do it about once a week, I think, something like that. Just have a look at chapter 13, verse 1. Look, teacher, what wonderful stones and wonderful buildings. Well, they were indeed wonderful. The construction of Herod's temple, it had begun in 19 BC, that's 19 years before

Christ was even born. And it was still under construction when we've got this little episode here. So probably you'd have been able to see the dumper trucks going up the lanes towards the temple, you know, with a driver bouncing along and a trail of dust behind. You probably see the scaffolding. And here's a pallet, and on the pallet there's gold ingots all piled up like new bricks waiting for the goldsmith to come and continue with the gilding of the roof. So it was an amazing sight. George Square's big, isn't it? The temple, listen to this, was 14 times the size of George Square. It was 162,000 square metres. It was colossal. And the disciples, they're overwhelmed with the grandeur of it all. Well, wouldn't you be? I would be as well.

Paul Barnett, listen to this, what he says in here. It's very insightful. He says, for the Jews, the greatness of the temple was not merely its size, but its significance as the place on earth where Yahweh, the God of Israel, chose to dwell. The temple, listen to this, it had messianic significance for the people of God. It was almost the incarnation of God on earth. Massive, isn't it?

And for these disciples, well, it's as good as it gets. Think about it. To be walking along with your Messiah. You know, the one you learnt about as a child at Sabbath school. You know, I guess they're just lost for words. And they open their mouth, don't they, without thinking, look Jesus, look at it all.

[6 : 41] And verse 2, well, it's a shock to the system. Jesus is often like that, isn't he? It's like a bull in the china shop. Just look at verse 2. Feel the shock of it, friends. Jesus said to him, do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. And he's sometimes like that, isn't he, Jesus? Is he like that in your own life sometimes? You know, reveal something that you don't expect you probably didn't want. It's like that when we open our Bibles, isn't it? And he's so obviously in control.

The temple's not going to fall down, is it? It's actually going to be thrown down. How shocking! God's going to, think about it, God's going to demolish his temple.

And so, if Jesus was to have left at this point, I think the disciples would be in sackcloth and ashes. I think they'd need counselling for the trauma. And what's going on? It's a new era, friends, isn't it? In salvation history, breaking in before them. Jesus dies on the cross, chapter 15, and the curtain in the temple is torn in two, isn't it? And it's the end of the temple system.

You remember Jesus, chapter 2. You can't put new wine into old wineskins. You know, I've not come to tinker around the edges of your religion here.

[8 : 23] But the disciples, they're a bit slow on the uptake. They're speechless. And so, they trail along behind Jesus, don't they, up to the Mount of Olives. You know, they're probably chatting it through behind him, trying to make sense of it all.

They're like the registrars and junior doctors and secretaries when there's a ward round going on. And the consultants come up to the bed, you know, and he's looked at the patient.

And then he makes an announcement of some really unexpected surgery. And they're all asking themselves, did he really say that? What does he mean? What's going on?

And they don't quite follow it all. And I guess you could have heard a pin drop. And if it was a ward round, I guess they're there, aren't they? They're scribbling down the Latin name of the procedure. The patient's eyes are popping out. Can you imagine it? And no one dared speak. And they scurried along behind the Messiah to the Mount of Olives. And it's probably Peter.

[9 : 26] Peter's not tongue-tied, is he? Verse 4. Look. Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things are to be accomplished?

And it's like he's asked Jesus for us, isn't it? It's like Jesus has been asked that question for us. And we're all sort of full of anticipation.

And we sit back waiting for the answer. He's got our attention. You know, it's like, I guess it's like a little child when they come up to the daddy. So, will you help me with the homework?

And he says, yes. And they sit down. And they begin to do the homework together. So they want to know, don't they? What will the sign be? Verse 4. Let's have the inside story.

Jesus. We like inside knowledge, don't we? Do you like inside knowledge? Traders like it, don't they? Stock markets love insider information, don't they?

[10 : 25] Am I right? They pay millions of pounds for it. If you walk up Buchanan Street here and turn left at the top, you're on Socky Hole Street. If you walk along Socky Hole Street, you'll get to the Savoy Centre.

It's an indoor market. And Moira has a little, what would you call it, a little stall in the indoor market at the Savoy Centre.

And Moira is a clairvoyant. And she'll read a crystal ball or she'll read a tarot card. And it costs £20 for 20 minutes.

I had a look on Saturday. And here's the bargain. You can get 35 minutes for just £30. We like inside information, don't we? And these are the disciples.

That's what they want. You know, they want to know how the future is going to unfold. What will the sign be, Jesus? There's verse 4 and we're all ears. And we've got two points.

[11 : 23] First of all, disruption of the world. And then secondly, disruption in the church. So first of all, let's think about the world. Disruption in the world.

And the disciples, they think, put yourselves in their shoes, they think that the end of the temple is associated with the end of the world. If the temple is going to be thrown down, they're thinking it's probably going to be judgment day.

That's their logic. So the disciples, they want a sign. They want a sign of the end times, the coming of the end. And Jesus doesn't give them a sign. You know, have a look at the end of verse 7.

Can you see? You see the end of verse 7? This must take place, but the end is not yet. Have a look at the last sentence of verse 8. These are but the beginning of birth pains.

Just the beginnings, says Jesus. Earthquakes, famines, wars. Don't be alarmed. Verse 7.

[12 : 27] Friends, it seems in this world there's going to be ongoing chaos. Am I right? But what do we expect in a world that's decoupled itself with its creator?

You know, there's consequences, isn't there, for doing things our way? We reap what we sow. And from Genesis chapter 3, it's been havoc in the world.

God, listen to this. God won't allow humanity to have peace on this earth. Now that's shocking. I'll say that again. God won't allow humanity to have peace on this earth.

You see, we can't make heaven here, think about it, without him. I know we all long for peace. Do you long for peace? We all long for peace. But ultimately, peace will only be in the environment of the new creation.

That's where our longing will be fully satisfied. You know, this world is disrupted, isn't it? By sin and its consequences.

[13 : 38] It's the year 2009. It's not the Garden of Eden. And it's not yet the new creation. And the disciples, they look at each other.

It's not going to be a quick fix then, is it? They think to themselves. But why not, we all ask. Why not call it a day, Jesus? And judge the world.

You know, we've waited long enough. Friends, this is why we've not had judgment day yet. This is why Christ has not returned.

He must have wanted to meet us. That's right. He must have wanted to meet us. Listen to this.

This is from 2 Peter. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved. That with the Lord, one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day.

[14 : 33] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, etc. So amidst the wars of verse 7, amidst the North Korean nuclear ambitions of verse 8, the earthquakes and the famines of this world in which we live, we need to stand firm as his people, you and me, to not panic, to not look at Auschwitz or 9-11 and think that God has lost control.

It's great, isn't it, to know mature Christians. Do you know mature Christians? You know, nothing seems to throw them off balance. Is that your experience? I've got some friends who live in Boswell, and they would meet that description.

They've both got serious illnesses, which will ultimately be terminal. But they're such a joy to be with. They're just full of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

They're such a delight. You know, their radiance could almost light the apartment where they live.

And this is what Jesus wants for his disciples. You are my rock in times of trouble.

[16 : 03] You lift me up when I fall down. All through the storm, your love is the anchor. My hope is in you alone.

So that was our first point, disruption in the world. And we'll think now, finally, in our second point, disruption in the church. So it's not just the world where there's going to be turmoil.

It's also going to be the church, verse 9. But be on your guard, can you see? For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues. And you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them.

Acts chapter 4. And two of these disciples here, with Jesus, Peter and John, they're up before. They're arrested. They're locked up. They're interrogated by the Jewish council.

Free speech. It's slowly being eroded, isn't it? Here in the United Kingdom. And as an institution, the Church of Scotland has been going the way of the world.

[17:10] And so Christians, who bear a message, can once more expect persecution. Brought before worldly authorities.

Have a look at verse 11. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say. But say whatever is given you in that hour.

For it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And here's an example of that. This is in 1555. And it's a lady, Elizabeth Warne.

And she was brought before the bishop several times. And when threatened with burning, told him, Do with me what you will. I will not deny Christ. If I am in error, so was he.

On July the 12th, 1555, she and eight of the nine were condemned as heretics. And were burned the following month at Stratford, Libow.

[18:10] The tenth person not condemned and burned at that time was her daughter Joan. She was released for a period of time and arrested again a few months later. During the time that her father was in prison and later her mother, Joan ministered to them as well as she was able.

At the time of her second arrest, she was 20 years old and known to be of the same doctrine as her parents. When examined by Bishop Bonner, she fearlessly declared that she would neither attend a popish mass nor confess her sins to a priest.

She was burned at the stake six months after her mother. Verse 12, friends, look at verse 12.

Brother, says Jesus, will deliver brother over to death.

And the father, his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. In May 2009, a Jordanian Muslim convert to Christianity was threatened by his father that if he did not publicly return to Islam within seven days, the father would shoot him dead.

Brother, says Jesus, will deliver brother over to death. And chapter 14 and verse 45, Judas kisses Jesus and he's arrested, isn't he?

[19:28] And so it was that the king entered his world. And all the hostile forces rose up against him.

He was betrayed. He was handed over to the Jewish institution, beaten, whipped, crucified. He was despised and rejected, says Isaiah, by men.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised. And we esteemed him not. And the temple curtain was torn, wasn't it?

In two. And Isaiah looks forward to that. And he says this, listen. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief.

When his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. Looks like the resurrection to me. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

[20:29] Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous.

That's you if you're trusting in Jesus. And she shall bear their iniquities. And so the integration point between God and man is no longer to be found in a building, but in a person.

Shall we pray? Dear Heavenly Father, through your word we meet your son.

And in this part of the Bible, he was fulfilling all that the temple and all that the prophets had pointed toward. He was incarnating the meeting place of God and man.

Moving things forward in your unfolding plan. And so in our own lives, we ask for the same. That you would dwell with us in him. That we would see your glory, your grandeur.

[21:40] And that through your indwelling spirit, we would be able to embody your son amidst this confused world. That like him, we would be rocks of stability amidst the chaos of this world.

Amidst the complex and confused relationships. Probably even within our families. That by looking back, we can show people the way forward.

That we can turn others from despair and toward hope. So we lift this prayer to you, Father.

Confidently, as we ask in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen.