

The Signs of the Times Pt. 2

Mark 13:9-13

Good Morning.

Dr. Tony Evans said, “*Your expectations always affect your behavior.*”

If you found out that you were terminally ill and only had one year to live, I can guarantee it will affect your behavior.

All of a sudden with only twelve months to live, certain things that used to be important wouldn't be important anymore.

Certain things that are wrong, you'd want to get right, because your expectation of death would transform your life.

We live how we really believe. People can't hear what we say, because our lives speak louder than our words!

Please open your Bibles to **Mark 13** as we continue in a verse-by-verse study of the **Gospel of Mark**.

Last week, we learned how Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple, and in 70 A.D. the Romans toppled every stone to retrieve the gold, fulfilling the prediction from 38 years earlier.

Since Jesus perfectly predicted the destruction of the Temple, it stands to reason that all other prophecies will happen exactly as He predicted as well.

The Disciples went to Jesus after the prediction of the Temple, and they asked...

*When will these things be? What will be the sign of Your coming? What will be the sign of the end of the **age**?*

Mark 13 speaks about the signs of Jesus' physical return, but it is not talking about the time Jesus comes for His Church, which is called the **rapture**!

The things described by Jesus in **Mark 13** are not the End but, they are creating the **foundation** for the End of the Age.

We also learned that the 7-year Tribulation is currently being restrained by the Holy Spirit, as the Lord said...

Our heavenly Father knows exactly where we are, and nothing can happen to us that He is not aware of.

We can trust Jesus to forgive our past, take care of us in our present, and to work all things together for good for our future.

This morning is part two of the signs of the times as we learn about more things that happen after the Church is raptured out of here and God's wrath is poured out on a Christ rejecting world.

I. The trials promised to the left behind.

Read **Mark 13:9**

There is a three-fold explanation of this prediction from Jesus as He told His disciples to be prepared for the persecution that would come against them before the end of the age.

The first explanation was an immediate one for the Disciples. The persecution they would endure was not the end, but they should have expected it because of their **relationship** to Jesus.

All of the Disciples were martyred for their faith except the Apostle John.

John, who did not die when he was boiled in oil, by the order of the Roman Emperor, was then exiled to the Greek island of **Patmos**, where he wrote the *Book of Revelation*.

Because of all of the immediate persecution and the future persecution, many people will be offended by Christianity.

Many of the early Christians became martyrs and were persecuted for their beliefs.

According to Foxe's Book of Martyrs, 6 million Christians were executed within the first three centuries of the Church.

Around the time the Apostle Paul was writing his Epistles which later become part of the New Testament, Ceasar Nero began persecuting Christians.

And for 250 years after Nero committed suicide, most of the Roman Emperors tried to stop the Christian faith from growing or even existing, but to no avail.

Jews would not accept the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, so when the Christian community was persecuted under Roman rule, the Jewish leadership encouraged the persecution.

In fact, Stephen was the first Christian to be martyred by stoning, which happened by the order of the Jewish Council.

Jesus was very clear with His Disciples that they would endure persecution, but that persecution was not the end of time.

Notice what Jesus said in *vs. 9*; these things will happen to you, ***for My sake, for a testimony to them.***

What if I were to tell you that the Lord has a plan for all of the things that He allows to happen to His chosen people.

Psalm 56:8 You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?

Psalm 56:9 When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me. NKJV

I want you to imagine being a TV reporter in heaven and doing an interview with an early follower of Christ.

You might ask, “*So tell me sir, how did you feel about being persecuted for Jesus’ sake after He ascended back to heaven?*”

The Disciple would probably answer, “*Can you believe I passed the test and was able to trust the Lord through the pain, as I was able to be a testimony for Jesus?*”

As the Apostle Paul while in prison preparing to be executed...

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, NKJV

The second explanation for this prediction from Jesus to be prepared for the persecution is for followers for **all** time.

According to *Church in Need*, “In recent years, Christian persecution has been sharply on the rise, and its terrible impacts have only begun to be felt.

The merciless targeting of Christians—driven by hatred of Christians and the faith itself—

...emerges as a common denominator in hundreds of testimonies of persecution from countries around the world.

According to ACN research, almost 340 million Christians around the world—or 1 out of every 7—live in a country where they suffer some form of persecution.”

We cannot base our faith on what is happening in this world, nor can we base our faith upon how we feel about current events.

No matter what our feelings tell us, the Word of God is truth!

The third explanation for this prediction from Jesus to be prepared for the persecution is for the **Tribulation** saints who will come to faith after the rapture of the Church.

Revelation 13 speaks about the Mark of the Beast which people will receive on the right hand or the forehead as a monetary system, like a grocery scanner used for common purchases.

What if the government insisted on a certain microchip to be inserted in people, in order to do business?

Many will receive the Mark of the Beast during the Tribulation period and surrender all of their rights to Satan and his beasts so that they can continue to do buy and sell merchandise.

Places like Wal-Mart would like to have a cashless society as their customers were willing to receive the Mark of the Beast. Like buying a snack on a plane, they want cashless transactions.

No exchange of money can take place without the Mark of the Beast, yet there will be those who will refuse the mark, even if it means that they will be persecuted and even put to death.

The Tribulation Saints will suffer all kinds of persecution rather than receive the Mark of the Beast.

People will either be marked by the Lamb, or marked by Satan; today, we too, will either be marked by the **Lamb** or by Satan.

II. Share the Gospel.

Read *Mark 13:10*

All through the New Testament, we are told to share the Good News of the Gospel.

Jesus told Peter to feed His Sheep; He told His followers to go into all the world; Paul said in his letters to preach the Gospel; so, as followers, we have the **command** to preach the Gospel.

David Guzik said, “*Jesus also promised that before the end, the gospel must go out to the whole world. The presence of persecution does not relieve the Church of this responsibility.*”

Because Jesus said the Gospel must first be preached to all the nations before the End of the Age comes, many people argue over the potential fulfillment of this prophecy.

The last words of Christ in, *Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." NKJV

Some say the Gospel was already preached to all the world in the first century and it seems the Apostle Paul confirms it.

Colossians 1:21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.

Colossians 1:22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

Colossians 1:23a if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard,

Colossians 1:23b...which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. NKJV

Whether or not you believe this prediction is fulfilled or not, the Gospel should be shared by believers forever.

Our lives should be a testimony of Jesus Christ and His transforming power within our lives. St. Francis said, *“Preach the Gospel and when necessary used words.”*

John Piper said, *“Don’t lose your sense of urgency or your sense of confidence that the gospel you believe can be taken — should be taken, must be taken — to every people group on the planet.*

It will be as relevant there as it is in your own heart, with tremendous power. It is a gospel bearing fruit in the whole world. It is a gospel proclaimed in all creation under heaven.”

We should preach the Gospel, not only because we are called to do it in the Bible, but we preach the Gospel because everyone talks about the things they are **passionate** about.

But if this command by Jesus has not yet been fulfilled, maybe by sharing the Gospel, we can help usher in the end.

III. I can’t speak well.

Read *Mark 13:11*

This statement by Jesus seems to contradict the statement from the Apostle Paul to his protégé Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. KJV

I personally spend hours of study time in order to put a sermon together.

Peter also encourages his readers to *1 Peter 3:15 Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, NIV*

When I first started preaching, someone told me I should be less organized and rigid within my sermons, but instead I should allow the Spirit to speak more freely through me.

Here in *Mark 13*, Jesus was teaching how the Holy Spirit will give you the words needed during persecution, He was not teaching us to neglect studying the Word of God for teaching.

A.T. Robertson said, “*There is no excuse for the lazy preacher who fails to prepare his sermon out of the mistaken reliance upon the Holy Spirit.*”

When I read this saying from Jesus about the Holy Spirit giving us the words to say when we need them, I can't help but think of Moses.

Exodus 4:10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

Exodus 4:11 So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?"

Exodus 4:12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." NKJV

Even after all of the signs and wonders the Lord performed, Moses still did not want to answer God's call.

In ***Exodus 4:10, slow of tongue*** means "*heavy of mouth.*"

Moses' excuse was not justified; because he was **well spoken** while in Egypt, 40 years earlier, before he ran away.

Acts 7:22 says Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

During his 40 years in the desert, Moses was used to talking to sheep, and he seemed to have no self-confidence. Moses needed to learn to find his sufficiency in the Lord.

The Lord does not want our excuses when we have a lack of obedience to preach the Gospel; He wants our **cooperation**.

The flip side to studying for teaching is those times when we need to be ready to defend our faith when we have not prepared.

There is a cooperation with the Lord that needs to take place during the times when opportunities arise to preach the Gospel.

It is during the times when we do not expect to talk about the Gospel that we need the Holy Spirit to intervene for us, but we should also be prepared.

The Lord does not need anything from us, but He has designed the relationship we have with Him as one of cooperation.

Jesus wants us to cooperate with Him, but we do not need to force or invent things, we work together with Him. The Holy Spirit and the Bible are the sources we need to partner with Him.

King David said in *Psalm 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. NKJV*

Think of the uneducated fisherman Peter, but after he was filled with the Holy Spirit in the *Book of Acts*, he was brought in before the counsel to defend the Gospel.

Acts 4:5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes,

Acts 4:6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

Acts 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

Acts 4:9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,

Acts 4:10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

Acts 4:11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:13a Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled.

Acts 4:13b And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

There is the key for us to be able to share the Gospel effectively, be like Peter and spend time with Jesus.

IV. Open opposition.

Read *Mark 13:12-13*

Again, there was an immediate, an ongoing, and a future prediction to these words from Jesus.

The early believers had families who out right disowned them because of their choice to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

If you professed Christ and left Judaism, you were considered a blasphemer and could lose your family, job, community, and they may have had a funeral service as if you were dead.

For today, David B. Barrett in his book *Today's Martyrs*, "*Some 165,000 Christians died for their faith in the year 2000.*

Researchers estimate that since the Day of Pentecost, more than 43 million Christians have been killed for their faith.

During the Tribulation Period, those who come to faith after the rapture of the Church will face **persecution** beyond anything we have ever seen before.

Because lawlessness abounds, the love of many will grow cold.

Lawlessness has always been present, but it will also increase.

Richard Thomas France said, “*And lawlessness will lead to the cooling off of love, a connection to be noted. Most men’s love is literally ‘the love of the many.’*” (France)

Things are going to get worse as time goes on.

In ***Mark 13:13***, to ***endure*** means to bear up under, to persevere under misfortunes and trials to **hold fast** to one's faith in Christ.

The persecution, false prophets, and general downgrade of society would not prevent the spread of the Gospel.

Following Christ is not always easy, but as Christ’s followers, we are called to be a light in this dark world.

We are also called to Be Salt and Light as preserving agents against the rotting effects from sin in this world.

This world is dying, and we have the only hope, and His name is Jesus!

So, we should share the Good News of the Gospel!

V. Take Home.

All of these things leading to the end are **not meant** to cause death and destruction but bring an end to them.

Martyn Lloyd Jones ~ Those who know their BIBLE should not be surprised at the state of the world as it is.

I would add that those who really know their Bible also know that the Great Tribulation is not to punish His bride the Church.

The Lord has promised to never leave nor forsake His Children.

Matthew 28:20 “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”

Man wants to try to fix and make a perfect earth, but man is flawed by sin, so Jesus will bring the current age to an end in order to create a New Heaven and a New Earth.

After the rapture of the Church, the human race will try to fix the mess this world has become and they will open themselves up to a New World leader who appears to have all the answers.

Studying End Times is interesting and exciting...but so what.

First of all, we can be assured that this will happen!

The Bible’s prophecies have come true with 100% accuracy.

If God could predict the coming Messiah so accurately; surely, He can tell you about End Times with the same accuracy.

God is not stuck in a time/space continuum like we are He knows exactly what and when things will take place.

In light of the fact that the Lord could come back at any moment, even today, what should I do?

Don't quit your job, move into a commune. Jesus also said to "***watch and be ready***" and ***Luke 19***, to "***occupy until I come.***"

No man knows the hour of Christ's return so, we should live like He is coming **today** and preach the Gospel with urgency.

To be fearful of the things we see here and now is to admit we do not trust the Lord to word these things out.

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Philippians 4:7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. NKJV

Dr. David Jeremiah said, "*One of the greatest truths of the Bible, and the one that gives me the most peace and hope, is Christ's return*".

As we spend time with Jesus and live for Jesus, then this broken hurt world will not only hear the Gospel of Christ, but they will also see it! Live Jesus Loud!