

Mark 13:1-8

Are you correctly interpreting the seasons?

“As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!’ 2 ‘Do you see all these great buildings?’ replied Jesus. ‘Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’

“3 As Jesus was sitting 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 that they are all about to be fulfilled?’ 5 Jesus said to them: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. 6 Many will come in my name, claiming, “I am he,” and will deceive many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 8 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.’”

Few Scriptures have been misunderstood more than today’s text has.

Even though Jesus warned: **“Watch out that no one deceives you,”** folks are still misled.

Three gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, and Luke gave sufficient information.

Yet many religious people disregard the evidence.

They regularly get it wrong.

Are you thinking:

“Bob, it’s Thanksgiving time.

Why are you talking such a debatable subject?”

Thanksgiving season is upon us; Santa’s holiday is fast approaching.

Rudolph, Donder, and the rest will soon be blitzing.

Today’s major objective is showing how this text relates to Thanksgiving season and peace.

Hardly anyone sees the connection between this scripture and seasons of joy.

Even some scholars miss the linkage.

In Acts 3, Peter told folks in Jerusalem how “times of refreshing could come from the Lord.”¹

Are you enjoying uplifting, revitalizing, invigorating times and seasons?

In Jesus’ day, folks kept looking for signals and signs-predictions of what is to come:

“The Pharisees and Sadducees² came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 He replied, ‘When evening comes, you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,” 3 and in the morning, “Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.” You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.’”³

Signs clearly indicated dreadful events, but Jesus’ contemporaries did not recognize them.

People talked about the weather as we do, but they were clueless as to what was happening around them

¹ Verse 19, NIV.

² These two groups usually opposed each other but they united in attempts to trip up Jesus.

³ Matthew 16:1-3 NIV

Using a similar illustration, Luke’s gospel told about a different, later occasion:

“He (Jesus) said to the crowd: ‘When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, “It’s going to rain,” and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, “It’s going to be hot,” and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?’”⁴

To what did signs Jesus refer?

What clear signs were they misinterpreting?

They neglected the signs related to our text.

The signs Jesus saw are evident today yet most folks are clueless and blind to them.

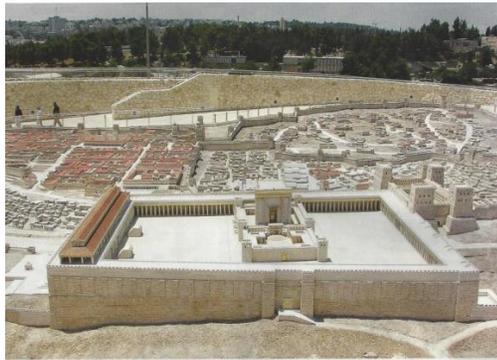
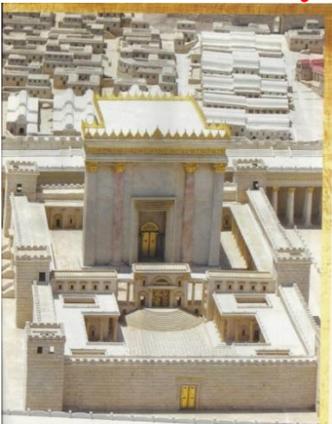
We began by saying that all three gospels include today’s incident.

For e. g., here is part of Matthew’s account:

“Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings.

⁴ Luke 12: 54-56 The Matthew 16 incident occurred during a Galilean ministry of Jesus; the Luke 12 apparently happened later across the Jordan River in Perea.

2 “Do you see all these things?” he asked.
“Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”
3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? 4 Jesus answered: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you.’”⁵



Two photos from “Biblical Archaeology Review”⁶ help us understand what Jesus said. **These photos of a scale model show how Jerusalem likely looked in Jesus’ day.**

A man who lost his son in one of the Israeli wars commissioned a scholar to

design and build this scale model of Jerusalem including its surrounding walls, Temple, significant buildings, and houses.

The model was originally constructed at the Holyland Hotel in Jerusalem, where Norma and I saw it in 1980. **In 2006 it was moved to the Israel Museum.**

The model Temple is shown in the left photo.

King Herod began construction of the massive Temple project about 16 BC.

According to the first century historian Josephus, the Temple’s main doors were forty-nine feet high and 24½ feet wide.

The Temple, its surrounding Court of the Gentiles, its porticos and the grounds are shown in the right photo.

The road in the foreground led east to the Kidron Valley and the Mt. of Olives.

When the disciples commented on the Temple’s magnificence, Jesus responded by saying that it was destined for destruction; not one stone would be left on another.

⁵ Matthew 24: 1-4 NIV

⁶ Ja/Feb 2016

Every one (stone) will be thrown down. Jesus and the disciples left the Temple area, followed the road into the Kidron Valley, and went to the Mt. of Olives where they (30AD) questioned him regarding the Temple’s destruction: **“When will this happen?”**

The Twelve also asked: “what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

As all three gospels state, Jesus emphasized:

- Wars and turmoil are endless; Christians will face tribulation, and must persevere to the end.
- **Jerusalem would soon fall to a foreign power.**
- Jesus will return to the earth to judge all people will be unannounced; we must always be ready for him.

Many scholars seem to forget the Temple’s ruin prompted the original discussion.

The questions the disciples asked help us understand this passage.

Luke’s gospel details Jesus’ answer:

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.

“They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”⁷

Four decades later, thousands of troops, commanded by Roman General Titus surrounded Jerusalem cutting its food supplies. **In 70 AD, after a two year seige of the city, the Roman Army destroyed the Temple and troops overran and sacked Jerusalem.**

They mutilated pregnant women and molested nursing mothers.

⁷ Luke 21: 20-24 NIV

They bound many people and marched them back to Rome as humiliated POWs. This happened exactly as Jesus predicted in 30 AD.

The Jews have never fully controlled Jerusalem since.

What Jesus prophesied precisely came true.

What does this heart-rending event have to do with Thanksgiving?

How does it relate to current events?

When the Lord gave Israel its original laws through Moses, he accentuated two things:

- **Keep praising and thanking God.**
- **Love one another and treat one another as you wish to be treated.**

Note this sampling from Leviticus 19:

15“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

16“Do not go about spreading slander among your people. “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the LORD.

17“Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.

18“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

We human beings have trouble submitting ourselves to God and his ways, don’t we?

Some anonymous person said:

“I love everyone; it’s people I can’t stand,”

Think of the hate, spite, deceit, finger-pointing, blaming, grudges, slander, perversions of justice, and revenge carried out every day.

Religious leaders often lead the protests, carry out revenge, and point fingers.

In Moses’ time, people kept complaining, grouching, grumbling, muttering, protesting bellyaching, etc. (those are the printable terms).

In the days of the prophets, folks were angry. Greed was a disease; pleasure and ease, overriding ambitions.

About 720 BC, the prophet Hosea said:

"Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac."

Honest people were disparaged; good folks, ridiculed. **Hosea continued:**

"They make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field."⁸

In Jesus' time, turmoil raged anew.

The Romans controlled Israel; Jesus' contemporaries were angry at injustice. A Roman occupation soldier could require a Jew to carry his personal belongings for a mile.

Imagine that you are working hard to feed your family.

A soldier of an occupation army stops you and demands that you carry his baggage a mile up the road.

You must stop whatever you are doing and carry the foreigner's luggage a mile, and then walk back to whatever you were doing before.

⁸ Hosea 9:7b & 10:4

Demands like that infuriated Jesus' generation causing rioting, sedition, and assassinations.

They chafed at and bemoaned the injustice.

If we are miserable, the easy route is to blame someone else.

Think how much energy the world spends trying to resolve injustice.

Should we try to be fair? Absolutely.

God designed his laws so all folks are treated right; we saw that in Leviticus.

But suppose we are treated wrongly, or think we are?

Is it OK to tell someone that he/she has not been just in a matter? Sure.

But if the other person persists, we do not allow anger and hostility to take charge.

We go "the second mile."

That's what Jesus' reference meant:

"If he orders you to go with him one mile, go with him two miles."⁹

Imagine that someone compels you to do something distasteful or unfair.

⁹ Matthew 5:41

Which is better?

To gripe, wrangle, and complain till your blood bubbles and simmers.

Or to pick up that luggage, smile hugely, and say to that person, "I have always wondered about Rome. Tell me about it while I carry your luggage."

When the first mile is over, say, "You are a long way from home. Why don't you tell me about your family as we go another mile?"

Jesus' contemporaries refused his advice and the other counsel he gave.

They wouldn't forgive, forget or act in love.

Their blood boiled to rage.

They even began blaming Jesus.

Hate division, hostility increased to a full revolution and the Romans quieted them.

The Jews lost their Temple, their beloved city and much of their country.

Protest, anger, and discontent might fetch short gains, but in the end, they ruin us.

- **This week, thank God daily for all he has given you.**

- **Pray for a peaceful heart.**

- **Share Jesus' love with someone.**

- **Go the second mile.**

How do we get over offenses against us?

"The more I think about it, the angrier I get."

We cannot control others, but we can control our thoughts.

Think of your mind as a plush green lawn.

You know what happens when people begin taking shortcuts across green grass.

Soon there is an ugly path that everyone takes.



Our minds travel often-used circuits; anger resembles a shortcut across a lawn.

To restore the green, we stop walking that path.

In the same way, we can heal our minds.

As soon as our mind thinks of an offense, we say, “I’m not going there—not taking that path. Instead, I am going to thank God for all he has given me.”



That’s why the Bible says: “Rejoice in the Lord, always.”

Joy in the Lord restores refreshing paths of peace within and without.

After a while, we don’t need to take the angry paths.

God bless you!



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