

Follow Me
Week 14: High Alert

- I. What does it look like for us to follow Jesus? That question rolls off the tongue easily and we might have some answers that come to mind. Some examples might be that we go to church, we're nice to people, we stand for conservative values i.e. truth, we stand for love, et cetera. I'm not making a value judgment on those examples; I'm simply acknowledging that our answers tend to be more about us and our behaviors rather than on: Jesus.
- A. We've been looking at Mark's gospel account because it's a true biographical account of Jesus's life. It's full of action and narrative and it lays out for us how Jesus lived His life. Even His death and resurrection are presented in a unique way. Mark doesn't give us a lot of theology (teachings or what to think), rather Mark takes us inside the events and shows us the events as they unfold. It's a gospel of action and we must come to terms with what it looks like to model our lives after Jesus in response to what He has done for us.
- B. Mark chapter 4 and 13 are two rare examples in a 16-chapter gospel. They are 2 chapters that hit the pause button on the narrative and take us into a very deep dive on the teachings of Jesus and here's how they can be summoned up:
1. Chapter 4: Ethics
 - And
 2. Chapter 13: End Times
- II. Today we're going to be in the End Times, but we were already in the End Times! We've been in the End Times since Pentecost or the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. This is a unique time in history referred to as the Church Age, Age of the Gentiles, and Age of Grace. It's the period between Pentecost and the Rapture.
- A. Of all the teachings Mark could have contained in this gospel, he was compelled by the Holy Spirit to dedicate Chapter 13 as a blueprint of the End Times.
- B. There are a few ground rules as we look at Mark 13.
1. This is a blueprint not an instruction manual. When we receive apocalyptic literature like Mark 13, some of Daniel, and most of Revelation, we can't take our sight off the main purpose of God's revelation. We've been given insight into the future so that we can have a confident hope in Jesus and strength to endure amid present trials.
 2. Revelation of the End Times is not a crystal ball. It is like looking through a stained-glass window. We can see the blueprint and that it's beautiful.
 3. Revelation isn't a code to crack so we can say we have special knowledge. We must be careful to keep a proper perspective on the End Times so that we don't become prideful.
 4. The point isn't to figure out what's going to happen and when. The point is:
How then are we to live?
- C. Let's look at Mark 13 and be reminded of its context. Jesus is in the final week of His life, and He's recently made a visit to the temple in Jerusalem. He wasn't happy with what He saw. What did He see? Jesus saw a culture of manipulation and oppression wrapped in a facade of god-honoring behavior. This is startling stuff, but from a human perspective it was "religion gone bad that put Jesus on the cross." To begin Mark 13, Jesus declares a total destruction of that religious system. The temple would be destroyed in spectacular fashion.
- D. That leads 4 of the disciples to have a private Q and A session with Jesus and He gave them a lot to consider! Mark 13:3-8 - 3 While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives across from the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" 5 Jesus told them, "Watch out that no one deceives you. 6 Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and they will deceive many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed; these things must take place, but it is not yet the end. 8 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains."
1. In a 1st Century Jewish mindset, the destruction of the temple and the end of the world were one in the same. They couldn't fathom a world where the temple was obsolete. That gives us important context as to how Jesus answers their question that is triggered by the declaration of the temple's destruction. They

want to know about the end of the world. And they want to know specifically the answers to the questions:

a. When is it going to happen?

And

b. What signs do we need to look for?

2. There's been a lot of books, magazines, podcasts, and \$\$ made on those two questions! I've read over Mark 13 and other passages many times and I can't get a direct answer to those questions.

a. In fact, later in Mark 13 Jesus states:

Mark 13:32 - 32 "Now concerning that day or hour no one knows- neither the angels in heaven nor the Son- but only the Father."

b. Wasting our time setting dates and putting together a detailed step by step manual of the End Times is sinful because it goes against the very words of Jesus:

Acts 1:7-8 - 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

E. The consistent theme of Scripture regarding the End Times is not to sweat the small stuff. Jesus is coming back just like He said and, in the meantime, stay focused on the mission! Jesus gives a blueprint of the End Times in Mark 13 for the purpose of keeping us alert and focused on the:
Mission!

1. Over 10 times, Jesus gives some variation of the imperative "watch out" or "be on guard." Things in the world will get really tough. Not just for Jesus followers but for everyone. Wars, earthquakes, and famines will be the beginnings of birth pains. The End will be a joyous time but getting there will not be easy. I haven't given birth, but I've been a part of 3 and the birthing process is no fun even though the result is amazing.
2. We can't miss the forest for the trees! Jesus is calling His disciples to be alert and think correctly about earthly troubles. Brokenness in our world should have the opposite effect than what we so often see. It should compel us to step in rather than step out. This is what Jesus is telling His disciples to stay on guard or watch out for. There is a spiritual battle taking place and the closer Satan gets to his eternal torment the more he's going to fight against it. Don't retreat, don't buy into the hysteria, push into the mission knowing that re-creation is coming!
3. There are a lot of benefits that come with being a Christ follower in the Age of Grace. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit and bear the fruit of God's Spirit within us! But don't get rocked to sleep spiritually by believing that life should be about us. Mark 13:9-13 would caution us against that. Be on guard! Be alert. Get busy sharing God's story from Norfolk to the nations!

Mark 13:10 - 10 And it is necessary that the gospel be preached to all nations.

a. This is no light matter. Opposition will be fierce but that doesn't alter the mission.

b. Mark 13:3-13 is Jesus giving insight to what the world will be like as the End Times draw nearer to His return. The world is incapable of fixing itself. We're barreling toward the return of Christ, and we need to stay alert and focused on the mission.

4. In verse 14, there is a significant shift that has occurred. Jesus is prophesying about a future period of time. Some really smart, godly people see verses 14-23 as the events that occurred in AD 70 with the destruction of the Jewish Temple. I could be wrong, but I don't hold that view. I hold to a:
Pretribulation Rapture --- 7 Year Tribulation --- Return of Christ --- 1000 Year Millennial Reign --- New Heavens and New Earth --- Eternal State

a. We don't get any indication of the rapture in Mark 13 but there are other passages that seem to indicate a pretribulation rapture. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is the most notable. So, where the rapture fits into the signs of Mark 13:3-8, I'm not sure. Our focus should be on staying alert and on mission.

F. Jesus followers won't remain after the rapture. The tribulation is a 7-year period of time in which God will judge the nations and purify the nation of Israel. It will not be a pleasant time to be on earth. Mark 13:14-23 is what the last 3.5 years of the tribulation will be like. There will be a new temple erected during the first years of the tribulation and the midpoint of the tribulation will be marked by:

The Abomination of Desolation

1. That's when the antichrist will defame the temple like never before. He will perform such an audacious act of idolatry in the temple, it will set off a 3.5-year period of wrath and misery on earth such as has never been experienced before. It will be chaos and misery on an unprecedented level, and you can read the details in Mark 13:14-23, but here is why I take these verses as future oriented (the tribulation period between the rapture and return of Christ) and unprecedented.

Mark 13:18-20 - 18 "Pray it won't happen in winter. 19 For those will be days of tribulation, the kind that hasn't been from the beginning of creation until now and never will be again.

2. We don't want to be around during the tribulation, and we don't have to be. The tribulation is about God judging the world and bringing forth His wrath. This isn't about God flipping His gasket. The wrath of God isn't uncontrollable anger. God's wrath is about the justice of God making right that which has been made wrong. God's justice isn't arbitrary, and we all should be subject to His justice.

All glory to King Jesus for taking our wrath upon Himself and exchanging it for His righteousness!

3. The most obvious reason for a pretribulation rapture:

1 Thess. 5:9 - 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, We don't live in fear of God's wrath; we stay alert and on mission!

4. At the end of the tribulation, God will have judged the nations and purified the nation of Israel. There will be those who repent and turn to God during the tribulation and eagerly await the return of Jesus. Christ followers in the Age of Grace won't be eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus, we will be a part of Jesus' entourage!

a. How great is it going to be to have the aerial view of this!!

Mark 13:24-27 - 24 "But in those days, after that tribulation: The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light; 25 the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 He will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

b. We are to stay alert and focused on the mission at hand.

Our future with Jesus is very bright (once we get past the initial stars falling)!

G. What do we make of this blueprint that Jesus provides for our future?

1. Jesus our brother and friend is also the:

The King!

2. As He talked with His disciples that day, Jesus was in full control of the future. That included the events surrounding His death and resurrection, His future return and everything else. Those of us in Christ have nothing to fear! But we do have a great responsibility: to stay alert and focused on the mission!
3. We should be aware of the times but not obsessed by the times. If our Biblical knowledge isn't compelling us into a dynamic relationship with God and others, then our Biblical knowledge could be an idol. We must stay alert and focused on the mission!
4. Mark 13 is a blueprint. I do my best to study all of God's word and when I put the pieces of the Bible together this timeline is the blueprint that most accurately reflects that study. But I could be wrong. If you are a post tribulation person you are welcome here at Tab. We are brothers and sisters in Christ and here's what we know for sure:

Jesus is coming back! We will worship Him for all eternity!

5. Do you know how Jesus describes our eternity with Him?

Like an extravagant party!

H. I hope you're there! You've been invited! This life can be hard. This life is fleeting. Jesus calls us to "Come! Follow Me!" It's an eternal party of fellowship and connection with Jesus and others that we don't want to miss. Trust Him today.