

# The Gospel of Mark

## Chapters 13-16



## Chapter 13 – the Little Apocalypse

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This discussion between Jesus and the disciples must be placed within the context of verse 1-3, and the previous chapters, in order to correctly understand the chapter.

However verse 8 is perhaps the most important:

“These are the beginning of birth pains.”

This idea of the birth of a new time, the ‘age to come’ is a metaphor used often by OT prophets. Jesus has already indicated that he was bringing a new kingdom into existence; he was bringing the ‘age to come’ but it will look very different from what the Jews, including the disciples expected.

Verses 5-13 begin to answer the disciples’ question about the destruction of the temple.

Jesus then moves into apocalyptic language to describe the circumstances surrounding the destruction of the temple in verses 14-31.

What language could one use to describe such a year? It won’t do simply to list the events, ghastly though they are. The only way of doing justice to such a time is in prophetic language, used originally (in Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4) to describe the fall of Babylon and Edom: the language of a dark sun and a quenched moon, of stars falling from the sky.

This is not a prediction of ‘the end of the world’, though many in Jerusalem at the time must have wished it was. Had it been the end of the world, what would have been the point of running away so frantically? No; but it was the end of their world, the close of the way of life that had failed, by the combination of injustice towards those inside and revolutionary violence towards those outside, to obey God’s call to be the light of the world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 183.

Verse 26 is the link between the destruction of the Temple and the new Kingdom that Jesus is bringing into existence. The term “Son of Man” comes from the vision of Daniel 7:13-14;

<sup>13</sup> “I saw in the night visions,

and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.

<sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed. <sup>2</sup>

 **Why is this prophecy of the destruction of the Temple so important for the original readers of Mark’s Gospel?**

## Some Final Comments and Thoughts

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- The fate Jesus has predicted for the Temple, destruction, is now his own fate.
- From Chapter 14 onwards Mark is focused on Jesus journey to the cross
- The gift of the anointing is book cased by the plotting of the chief priests and the plotting of Judas.
- The seasonal setting of the Passion Week is the Passover. This has significant history and future anticipation for the Jewish nation.

 **Why do you think the Priests needed to choose a particular time for arresting Jesus?**

<sup>2</sup> *English Standard Version* Da 7:13–14.

- Jesus takes the Passover meal and places himself within the significance of the meal. Because of Paul's comments to the Corinthian church we know that these comments by Jesus have become a significant ritual within the church.
- Jesus' prayer in the Garden brings a significant window into the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

The church is called to live in the middle of this great scene: surrounded by confusion, false loyalty, direct attack and traitor's kisses, those who name the name of Christ must stay in the garden with him until the Father's will is done.<sup>3</sup>

- Jesus' arrest comes in an out-of-the way place surrounded only by his closest disciples.

In his trial in front of the Sanhedrin there are four things to consider;

1/ **The bottom line charge** - Jesus is a false prophet. What he prophesied about Peter is about to come true

2/ **Jesus' attitude towards the Temple** - destroy and rebuild

3/ **Jesus claim to kingship.** "You are the King?" is the same as Peter's declaration about Jesus. When he adds 'The son of the Blessed One', this doesn't mean he is thinking that the Messiah will be God's son in the later Christian sense. 'Son of God', as we have seen, is an honorific title for the Messiah, and had been since the Psalms at least. But for Mark, and for Christian readers since, this phrase forms a transition to Jesus' shocking reply—as well as a link with the very beginning of the gospel, where the voice from heaven, repeated at the transfiguration, assures Jesus, and then the disciples, that this is indeed who he really is.

4/ **Jesus incriminates himself at once on the political charge.**

Underneath his prophetic work, and his words against the Temple, he does indeed believe himself to be God's anointed. Everything he has done and said since his baptism has been based on that belief, and he isn't going to deny it now. But he goes much further. He draws together the two key biblical quotations he has already used to talk about the deeper meaning of messiahship: [Psalm 110 \(Mark 12:36\)](#) and [Daniel 7:13 \(Mark 13:26\)](#). The combination is explosive, and gives Caiaphas, in addition to the charge of being a

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 200.

rebel king, a charge he can present to his fellow-Jews as a sufficient reason for handing Jesus over: blasphemy

It is, rather, that these two biblical texts, taken together, answer all the questions simultaneously, and add to them the assertion that Jesus will be vindicated, exalted to a place at God's right hand. The answer says, in a tight-packed phrase: yes, I am a true prophet; yes, what I said about the Temple will come true; yes, I am the Messiah; *you will see me vindicated*; and my vindication will mean that I share the very throne of Israel's God.<sup>4</sup>

- Jesus' is crucified as "King of the Jews" – 15:2, 9, 12, 18 and 25
- 15:32 opposes human view-point from God's view-point. Jesus had to stay on the cross in order for him to fulfil the requirement of the promised Messiah.
- The Roman centurion becomes the first sane human being in Mark's gospel to call Jesus God's son, and mean it. Yes, says Mark to his possibly Roman audience; and if him, why not more?
- Mark begins his story with Jesus the Son of God:
  - at his baptism the voice declare this is my son
  - at the transfiguration the same is declared
  - the parable of the wicked tenants says the son is sent and killed
  - Caiaphas asks are you the Messiah the son of God?
  - The Roman soldier acknowledges who Jesus was.
- Joseph, by touching a dead body, become ceremonially unclean and is unable to participate in the Passover meal. Maybe he recognised that the Passover have moved on?
- There are the two 'extra' endings of Mark. They are not found in the best manuscripts, but are added in to several others in a bewildering variety of ways.
- The shorter ending is quite unlike Mark's style. It is grandiose and formal. It is a general statement of Christian faith in what happened after Easter, but it doesn't link in to the rest of Mark in any visible way, as we might have expected.
- The longer ending looks very much like a compilation of bits and pieces from the resurrection narratives of Matthew and Luke, with some extra parts added.

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<sup>4</sup> Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 205.

- The most probable answer is that, the ending of Mark's original scroll was torn off. Remember it would be the most outward part of the scroll.

It was a great day—sometimes called the birthday of the church. The great wind of God's spirit had swept through Jesus' followers and filled them with a new joy and a sense of God's presence and power. Their leader, Peter, who only a few weeks before had been crying like a baby because he'd lied and cursed and denied even knowing Jesus, found himself on his feet explaining to a huge crowd that something had happened which had changed the world for ever. What God had done for him, Peter, he was beginning to do for the whole world: new life, forgiveness, new hope and power were opening up like spring flowers after a long winter. A new age had begun in which the living God was going to do new things in the world—beginning then and there with the individuals who were listening to him. 'This promise is for *you*' he said, 'and for your children, and for everyone who is far away'<sup>5</sup>

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