

I. Introduction

- A. Have you ever heard the phrase "Missing the forest for the trees"?
 - 1. Story: Seminary friend lived in South Korea for a while ... visited Seoul ... nachos
 - 2. Only thing he could figure is that they got so wrapped up in the details of what each topping might be, they never stopped and asked the big question, "But how does this all taste together?"
- B. With prophetic passages like today's, it's really easy to get lost in all the details but miss the main driving point throughout.
 - 1. Some things are straight forward and chronological.
 - 2. Other things are stated as happening already but haven't yet reached their full culmination. (Already but not yet)
 - 3. And even more things they teach are just plain unclear.
- C. And so we must approach passages today with great humility. No claims of "I know exactly what this means." This is especially true for Mark 13: it's meaning is so "crystal-clear" that theologians have been arguing about it for the last 2,000 years.
- D. But what IS crystal clear, no matter how we interpret this, is the response Jesus asks of us.

And as He came out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what 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."
(Mark 13:1-2)

- E. The Disciples were totally impressed with these temple buildings.
 - 1. Jesus: "Yeah, it's all coming down. The time of the temple is over."
 - 2. Disciples: this was shocking and sounded like the end of the world as we know it

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?" (Mark 13:3-4)

- 3. The disciples want to know two things:
 - a. WHEN will the temple be destroyed?
 - b. WHAT are the SIGNS that this is about to happen?
- 4. And then for an entire chapter, Jesus answers these questions, but rather cryptically.
 - a. But Jesus also answered the question they didn't ask but should have: Who should we be becoming? What should we be doing?
 - b. We'll get to that layer at the end, but first let's run through the prophetic material.

5. My view up front: almost everything Jesus predicts in this passage has already happened.
 - a. It was the future for His disciples, but it is the past for us.
 - b. Where I land on this is not the way everyone sees it. What I believe this passage says agrees with some really brilliant, faithful Christians scholars and disagrees with others.
6. That being said, not that you need permission, but PLEASE feel very free to disagree with where I will land on this.
 - a. I will come right out and say that there are problems with my view. And with EVERY view on this. Lack of clarity is likely intentional on Jesus' part.
 - b. But if you do disagree, please do so having wrestled with the actual text of Scripture, not just "I was always taught" or "The Left Behind series says so."
 - c. We can interpret this kind of passage differently.
7. And after all, the main point of this text is not the specifics of the prophecies, it's Jesus unquestioned call to discipleship.

And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. [Now that's an interesting first thing for Jesus to say] Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors 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 beginning of the birth pains. (Mark 13:5-8)

- F. So Jesus tells the disciples about all these events that will take place. but then He says, this isn't the end, this isn't what you're looking for.
 1. So if THESE aren't the signs that the temple's destruction is just about to happen, why would Jesus even bring them up?
 - a. Well-meaning prophecy-junkies existed in the 1st century too.
 - b. Just like now, there were plenty of people who would see events like earthquakes, famines and wars (pandemics!) and people claiming to be the real messiah, as signs that something momentous is about to happen or the world is going to end.
 2. Jesus is protecting His disciples by calling out all of the false alarms and false leaders that existed in their culture. History will run its course ... playlist
 3. Followers of Jesus are NOT to be distracted, anxious or jump to hasty conclusions about these things. Most even-keeled people on the planet.
 4. WE have work to do. But just to summarize:
- II. Not Yet (False Alarms):
 - A. False christs
 - B. Wars/Rumors of wars
 - C. Earthquakes and famines
 - D. *BUT these do not signal the end. They signal the beginning, like the first of many contractions in the long process of childbirth.
 1. I happen to have some experience with this experience of childbirth. :-)

2. Growing regularity and growing intensity, just like contractions

“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 the 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. (Mark 13:9-13)

III. In the Meantime:

- A. Disciples intensely persecuted
- B. Disciples witness before rulers
- C. The Gospel goes global (beyond Israel). The sense given here is that the Good News that was given to the Jews in Israel is now pointed outward. It’s now also Good News for the gentiles.
- D. The Gospel divides the strongest of bonds, even families
- E. Big picture of this section: “You, my disciples must expect in the near future to endure hardship from every angle and on an international scale... for the sake of spreading the Good News about me.”

“But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where [it] ~~he~~ ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that it may not happen in winter. For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand. (Mark 13:14-23)

IV. The End of the Temple

- A. Abomination of Desolation (Temple destroyed/Occupying army in its place)
 - 1. This is a term borrowed from Daniel. In Daniel, this abomination is shown to be an invading force, an army that takes up residence in the temple compound.
 - 2. In fact, in Luke’s version of these words of Jesus (Luke 21:20), he very literally describes this abomination as armies invading Jerusalem.
 - 3. The prophecy of Daniel had already happened in 167 BC: Antiochus Epiphanes altar to Zeus on top of the temple altar

4. But now Jesus is saying that something like this will happen again before the destruction of the temple (that we now know happened in AD 70)
 5. An abomination is something that causes horror. Old Testament, connected with idolatry
 6. Desolation is the idea of something being deserted by those who belong there.
 7. So put together, Jesus is envisioning a vile, horrible idolatrous force displacing the people of Israel and their temple and standing in its place.
 8. When you see this horrible military force coming to take up residence in Jerusalem and the temple, get outta Dodge! Don't hesitate for one minute and pray that the conditions for escape are as good as possible.
- B. Horrible Tribulation (get out of Judea!)
1. Right before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem and laid siege to the city for five months.
 2. It was a time of horrible misery for the people in that area (1.1 m Jews died).
 3. In a final act of military might, the army destroyed the Temple, even digging up the stones that were set below ground.
 4. And so, no stone was left on another and the city of Jerusalem and its temple were emptied out, left desolate.
 5. In the place where the temple once stood: the Roman army
- C. More false christs

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
(Mark 12:24-25)

1. We need to read the words about the sun and moon darkening and the stars falling from heaven in the cultural, poetic way they were used in the Old Testament Prophets that Jesus is echoing here.
 - a. This is not meant to be taken literally: poetic metaphors borrowed from the OT
 - b. Read Isaiah 13: same words used to poetically describe the downfall of Babylon
2. Isaiah was not saying that the sun, moon and stars would actually stop shining.
 - a. Rather He's poetically referring to the lights in the sky that systematically and predictably govern day and night.
 - b. In the same way that you could hardly imagine a change-up in the sun, moon and stars that govern the heavens, so will be the shocking nature of how Babylon will go from most powerful governing empire on the planet to being a conquered "has-been."
3. Jesus is using this poetic imagery to say that there is a MAJOR shift in power about to happen.
4. He also says that the "powers in the heavens will be shaken."
 1. "Powers in heaven" = fallen spiritual beings who were ruling over the nations
 2. Daniel 10: angelic messenger/ "Prince of Persia"
 3. The biblical worldview is deeply supernatural. The rulers and kingdoms we see here on Earth are not all there is. There are supernatural evil puppet-masters behind the scenes who have real power and real authority over the peoples of the world.

D. Jesus is telling His disciples that the power structure of fallen spiritual beings is about to be shaken to the core. A seismic shift is about to happen. But what?

And then they [who is “they”] will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then 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. From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that He is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. (Mark 13:26-31)

1. Most people assume that this passage is referring to Jesus returning to the Earth to rule at the end of time. And certainly He will!
 - a. But when Jesus says, “They will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds” in THIS passage, who is the “they”?
 - b. He’s referring to the beings He just mentioned, the powers (fallen spiritual rulers) in the spiritual realm.
 - c. Also, Jesus is very clearly referencing Daniel 7 here.
 - d. In a vision, Daniel sees “One like a Son of Man” ascending on a cloud to the throne of God. This Son of Man is then given authority over all of the demonic beastly spiritual powers who have been wreaking havoc on the Earth.
 - e. So if we read this in the context of Daniel 7 that Jesus sets it in, this is not a picture of Jesus descending back down to Earth.
 - f. This is a picture of Jesus ASCENDING up to the throne of God and unseating all the fallen spiritual beings from their places of power.
 - g. And having defanged these evil beings and removing their authority over all the gentile nations of the Earth, Jesus now sends out His messengers into all the Earth to proclaim the Gospel and call His chosen ones to faith in Him.
 - h. Jesus’ ascension to Heaven at the right hand of God inaugurates a new move of God on Earth, the age of the church where the servants of Jesus begin to take the message of the Gospel to the ends of the globe.
2. And Jesus says that the disciples’ generation will see this happen.
 - a. And the enthronement of Jesus IN HEAVEN at His ascension would eventually be visibly seen on Earth by the destruction of the temple.
 - 1) The temple system will be removed because it is no longer needed!
 - 2) The animal sacrifices are no longer needed because a once-for-all-sacrifice has been made.
 - 3) A physical building in Jerusalem where Heaven and Earth overlap is no longer needed because Jesus, the true and greater intersection of Heaven and Earth, has now replaced it.
 - b. This is one of the reasons I don’t see THESE specific words of Jesus in v. 26 as referring to the very end times and His return to Earth. There are other passages in the Bible that describe Jesus’ return.

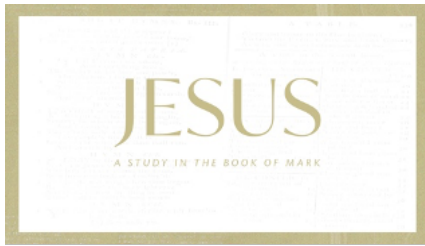
- c. All of the things Jesus predicts in this passage—persecution, the Gospel going global, Jesus’ ascension to the throne in Heaven and the eventual destruction of the Temple—all of these things were actually witnessed by the His disciples in their generation. And they were all proof of Jesus’ enthronement over all of Heaven and Earth.
- 3. Remember what He said on that day, “All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go make disciples.”
 - a. Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension to Heaven did not only provide salvation to us. It BROKE the authority of the enemy so that the Gospel message could go out into the world unhindered.
 - b. Is the enemy going down fighting? Oh yes, they are.
 - c. But the degree of authority they once had has been broken and the Kingdom of God has been growing at a blazing pace ever since!
 - 1) Do you realize that the population of professing Christians living on the Earth today (2.5 billion) is over 10 times the entire population of earth in the first century (200 million)
 - 2) The last 2,000 years has been a mind-boggling move of God on this Earth. Why the change? Why the exponential growth of God-followers in this chapter of history?
 - 3) Because Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension to power over all of Heaven and Earth literally changed EVERYTHING!
- 4. But now Jesus turns a corner and answers a question beyond what they’ve asked.
 - a. Up to this point He’s been answering questions about the events leading up to and surrounding the destruction of the temple: “these” or “those” “days”... plural... periods of time where a series of events would happen.
 - b. But now He starts talking about “that” “day”... singular. A day and time when a completely singular historical event will happen.
 - c. This is His way of shifting the subject to a future “day” that all Jews would have known about and anticipated. The “Day of Yahweh” “The Day of the Lord”
 - d. The future time where God wraps everything up and finally brings His total rule back to Earth for good. The end of all things.
- 5. In verses 3-31, Jesus has been preparing the disciples for THEIR future. Here in verse 32 is where Jesus starts preparing us for OUR future.

But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake. (Mark 13:32-37)

- a. There is a future day and time that is coming that only God the Father knows.

- b. The parable Jesus tells seems to pick up where He left off before.
 - 1) A man (Jesus!) goes away on a journey (ascension to Heaven!) and He hasn't returned yet.
 - 2) In His absence, He's left his servants in charge and they all have work to do.
 - 3) His command to all of them is to be alert, stay awake, keep at your work, and be ready for His return.
 - 6. We know from what Jesus says here in Mark, the other Gospels, Paul's writings, the book of Revelation and a whole heap of passages in the Old Testament, that there will be a day when The Great King of Heaven finally comes back down to Earth.... ON THE CLOUDS (Acts 1:11), just like He ascended up to Heaven!
 - 7. But our job is not to busy ourselves trying to figure out when exactly that will be. Why busy yourself figuring out something that we can't possibly know?
- IV. **Jesus' intent for all this prophetic teaching was not that we would all become end-times theorists. His intent is that we would become life-long loyal disciples.**
 - A. Look at how He starts His whole answer to the disciples' questions.
 - 1. v. 5 "See that no one leads you astray." And then He persistently peppers His cryptic prophetic answers with very clear discipleship mandates.
 - 2. v. 7 "do not be alarmed"
 - 3. v. 9 "Be on your guard"
 - 4. v. 10 "the Gospel must ... be proclaimed to all nations"
 - 5. v. 11 "do not be anxious"
 - 6. v. 13 "the one who endures to the end will be saved"
 - 7. v. 21, concerning false messiahs, "do not believe it"
 - 8. v. 23 Once again, "be on guard"
 - 9. v. 33 "Be on guard, keep awake"
 - 10. v. 35 "stay awake"
 - 11. v. 37 "stay awake"
 - B. Humanity's journey to the finale of history will be a childbirth-like, ever intensifying, ever increasing tempo of repeated events leading to the end. We do not and cannot know how long this will last.
 - C. But what we CAN know is who we are called to be no matter what place in the journey we find ourselves:
 - D. God is calling us to be loyal, faith-filled, love-saturated, surrendered, watchful, enduring, courageous servants of King Jesus.
 - E. THIS applies to me whether Jesus returns in 3 minutes or 3,000 years.
 - F. The question is, "Is this who you currently are? A loyal, lay-down-your life, take-up-your-cross, surrendered-to-Jesus disciple who is walking in alertness and a Spirit-led intensity for the sake of Jesus' Kingdom.
 - G. We in America have this weird, lazy tendency to think, "Well, when things start getting serious, I'll get serious. I have time."
 - H. But here's the reality: you can't begin training for a marathon the day before. And you can't become the strong, courageous, loyal disciple you'll need to be if your answer is always "tomorrow."

- I. There's something even more pressing. If you haven't yet surrendered your life to Jesus, I implore you to do so today. Because in every one of our lives, there will be that day when "tomorrow" will be too late. None of us know when our today will be that day.
 - 1. Please don't miss the amazing reality of all this. Jesus came to Earth and will return to this Earth because He loves you, you need Him and He wants to save you.
 - 2. There is no one in history who has done more for you or loved you more than Jesus Christ. And you can surrender to Him today. If that's where you are, pray after me:



MARK 13:3-37

ALREADY+NOT YET = FOLLOW JESUS

MARCH 7, 2021 | PASTOR TRAVIS EDGERTON



GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

1 If you had less than a week to live, what would you want to be sure those close to you understood?

Jesus was having quite the busy week in Jerusalem, as it was His last. Much of Jesus' final week was spent in the temple complex. Herod, Rome's puppet king, had begun a "remodel" of the temple about 20 BC, a project not completed until A.D. 64. It was destroyed by the occupying Romans in A.D. 70 in response to a Jewish uprising. In Mark 13, sometimes called "The Little Apocalypse," Jesus spoiled that surprise and connected it to a future, and bigger, surprise.

QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

1 Someone read **Mark 13:3-8** in their Bible.

When the disciples broke the silence after Jesus spoke about the temple's destruction in vs. 1-2, what two questions did they ask? Why would they have asked those questions privately?

Travis said they should have asked Jesus these two questions instead: Who should we be becoming? What should we be doing? Why would those have been better questions to ask?

What are two words that could summarize Jesus' answer in vs. 5-8?

2 Someone read **Mark 13:9-13** in their Bible.

After describing some of the persecution the disciples would face in vs. 9-11, Jesus then says they will receive help from the Holy Spirit. Jesus also teaches them more about how the Holy Spirit will come alongside them to help them in John 14. As Comforter, He comes alongside believers to help them continue to work while they wait. As Counselor, He helps them bear effective witness. Counselor has the sense here of an advocate, like a defense attorney.

How would this have comforted the disciples? What courage and comfort do you draw from the Holy Spirit's help in your life?

3 Someone read **Mark 13:14-31** in their Bible.

In the midst of a dreary and depressing passage, which words of hope from Jesus encourage you most?

The temple, while a symbol of Jewish identity and nationhood by virtue of that intense focus, prevented Jews from liberally making God's blessing available to those who weren't Jews. **How can focusing on our own identity actually prevent us from freely offering God's blessing to those who aren't like us or in our group?**

4 Someone read **Mark 13:32-37** in their Bible.

Jesus says even the Son doesn't know the day or hour of these events (v. 32). A good deal of ancient and modern writing on prophecy tries to figure out precise timing of events, reducing the Bible to the level of a horoscope.

What does this passage teach us about leaving issues like this (predicting Jesus' return) to God and trusting Him when the future is not entirely clear?

How can the analogy of the owner who leaves his house in charge of his servants help you explain the concept of Jesus' return to someone else?

LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

1 In v. 13, Jesus says we need patience to hold onto our faith in the midst of difficulties. How can we cultivate deeper patience in our lives?

2 The concluding command in this chapter is not, "Sit down and work out a prophetic timetable," but instead, "Be on your guard and keep awake!" What does Jesus mean by this command, and how can we carry it out so that we are not caught "being found asleep"?

3 Travis wrapped up the message by saying that God is calling us to be loyal, faith-filled, love-saturated, surrendered, watchful, enduring, courageous servants of King Jesus. The question is this: "Is this who you currently are?" **Looking at who God is calling us to be in the statement above, does that simply match your intentions of following Jesus or does it reflect how you are currently living for Jesus? How can you be taking steps of growth?**

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time in prayer with your group.

NEXT WEEK:

Read **MARK 14:12-42** before Sunday and your next home group gathering. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME: Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE: If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE: Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

How to Use this Discussion Guide

This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to ask every question during your group discussion. This guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit cpmodesto.org/groupleaders to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit cpmodesto.org/homegroups and use the Home Group Finder!

COMMENTARY

MARK 13:3-37

Jesus' teaching on the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem and the coming of the Son of Man in Mark 13 are difficult to untangle. Despite this difficulty, two primary pastoral emphases are clear in the warnings to beware of deception and to be prepared for Christ's return. The disciples' amazement at the temple complex demonstrated they did not appreciate the prophetic acts of 11:12-21 and prepared for Jesus' prediction of the utter destruction of Jerusalem's temple. Notable among events preceding the destruction of the temple is the appearance of messianic pretenders. Believers are warned not to be taken in by such pretenders or to mistake "the beginning of the birth pains" for God's judgment on Jerusalem.

Acts and Paul's letters witness that the events related to the early Christian community in 13:9-13 were fulfilled before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. Paul, for example, was beaten in synagogues five times (2 Cor. 11:24), testified before governors (Acts 18:12-13; 24:1-2; 25:7-8) and kings (Acts 9:15; 26:1-2). And he was accused of spreading the Gospel throughout the known world (Acts 17:6; see Rom. 15:19). Peter and others bore Spirit-inspired witness (Acts 4:8-22).

The events of 13:14-23 concern the Roman campaign against Judea. "Never to be equaled again" in verse 19 suggests an event within human history rather than its conclusion. The "abomination that causes desolation" refers to the defiling of the temple. As before, Jesus cautioned believers about false messiahs and false prophets. In the midst of judgment, God "has shortened" the days of war for the sake of believers ("the elect").

The events surrounding the coming of Christ belong to a time after the destruction of Jerusalem. The coming of Christ in power and glory (see 9:1) is an event whose cosmic repercussions echo Old Testament descriptions of the coming of God for judgment (for example, Isa. 13:10; 34:4). Jesus here emphasized His coming to save the elect.

The fig tree lesson is likely a warning to be prepared for Christ's coming, though "this generation" suggests that the destruction of Jerusalem was in view. "That day," which was unknown even to the Son, is the time of Christ's return. Christians' duty in the interim is to perform assigned tasks rather than speculate about God's timetable. The church must not repeat Israel's failure to be found fruitless when visited by Christ.