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What Must Be Done Before the End Comes

Mark 13:10

Have you ever been impressed with buildings? Some people are impressed with man's ability to build buildings. Throughout history man has built some very interesting and beautiful buildings and structures. We make lists of these "Wonders of the World." The first impressive building mentioned in the Bible is the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). I wonder how high the Tower of Babel was before God confused their languages. Today the tallest building in the world is the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. It is 2,717 feet high and has 163 floors with an observation deck on top. **That is over a half-mile high.** It was completed in 2010. By comparison, the tallest building now in the United States is the One World Trade Center in New York City, New York. It was completed in 2014. It is currently the 7th tallest building in the world. It is 1,776 feet high, a deliberate reference to the year of our Independence. In Saudi Arabia, they are building a skyscraper that will be 3,281 feet high. That is 1,000 meters. It is called the Jeddah Tower. It is supposed to be completed in 2028. We can become impressed with our ability to build things. As Jesus and His disciples were leaving the Temple mount, one of the disciples was impressed with the Temple.

Mark 13:1 *"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!'"* Solomon's Temple was destroyed on the 9th of Av 423 B.C. The second temple was built around 349 B.C. when Ezra and many exiles returned to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity (Ezra 1-6). When Herod was king in Judah, he began expanding and enlarging the Temple and the Temple mount in Jerusalem. He increased the size of the courtyards. He doubled the height of the Temple. He covered the Temple in gold. It was a beautiful sight to behold, especially when the morning and evening sun shown on the building. His renovation of the Temple was not fully completed until AD 63. One important fact to note, this second temple never housed the ark of the covenant. That disappeared around the destruction of the first temple. In the second temple, priests would sprinkle the animal blood on a rock where the ark of the covenant had sat. The presence of the Lord had not been in the second temple like He was in the first temple. The presence of the Lord was in the second temple every time Jesus was there. This evening as He left, it would be His last time in the temple.

Verse 2 *"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'"* Jesus had spoken the truth even while the temple was under construction. He declared that

there would come a day when the Temple will be totally and completely destroyed. It was not long after its completion that the second temple would be destroyed by the Romans. Titus did not intend to destroy the temple but in the confusion of burning Jerusalem, the temple was also set on fire on the 9th of Av, the same day the first temple was burned. The disciples could not believe what Jesus was telling them. In their minds, God would never let this happen. It was too beautiful, too important, too much time and effort had been put into this building. Yet Jesus spoke the truth. Not one stone would be left upon another. People would separate every stone attempting to get the gold that had melted. Of course, the disciples wanted to know when this was going to start and end.

Verse 3-4 *“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?’”* Both Matthew (24:3) and Luke (21:7) record similar questions of Jesus and His response. Jesus only talked about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Yet the disciples asked Jesus when *“these things”* were to happen. What other thing or things were the disciples asking about? My guess is that in their minds the temple would never be destroyed if Jerusalem itself wasn’t destroyed with it. And if the capital city fell, what about the nation of Israel? That is what happened in the past. When the first temple was destroyed, the city of Jerusalem was also destroyed and the nation was taken into captivity. Since Jesus is talking about the destruction of the temple, the disciples believe the city and nation are going to fall too. When will this all start?

“And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?” How will they know when it is finished? The Jews were always looking for a sign. The Greeks were always seeking wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22). Paul and the disciples of Jesus always preached Christ crucified and resurrected. This was hard for Jews to accept and it made no sense to the Greeks. What the disciples were asking of Jesus was a sign when all of this would be over. For the disciples the destruction of the temple, Jerusalem and Israel is the end of their world. When is this going to end? Ultimately, the end will come when Jesus returns. When will He return? We are not told. We are told to always be ready. It could happen anytime. What things were going to take place between Jesus’ ascension and His return? Jesus tells of three things that will occur first and increase in intensity until His return. The first is **deception**.

Verses 5-6 *“And Jesus answering them, began to say: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He’ and will deceive many. Jesus did not give a date when Jerusalem and the temple would fall. If He did, they would not have believed Him. Who would have thought that within 40 years*

the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed and the nation of Israel scattered. What Jesus did tell the disciples about was the coming deception. Since the ascension of Jesus into heaven, **the start of the end will begin with deception** and deception will continue and actually increase up to the end (Mark 13:22). It was not long after the ascension of Jesus into heaven that the false teachings began. The writers of the New Testament warned the followers of Jesus about this deception, these false teachings (1 Timothy 4:1-3 / 2 Peter 2:1-3). Jesus said many people would be deceived. Don't you fall into this trap. Jesus Himself warned the people. He said, *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins"* (John 8:24). Who did Jesus claim to be? He claimed to be God (8:58 / 10:30). He expects us to believe Him and follow Him. Unfortunately, many will be deceived. Many continue to be deceived. Many people believe Jesus is only a good Man. They do not believe He is God. They are deceived. Many will come and proclaim that they know and teach the truth, but they do not. They teach something other than biblical truth. Be careful. Do not be deceived. Believe Jesus. Believe His claim. Follow Him intentionally and faithfully. The second event that will occur and increase before the return of Jesus is **war**.

Verses 7-8 *"But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."* It seems as though every generation has had its wars or rumors of wars. And with all this fighting there seems to be talk of the end times. We think, this one is "the one!" This one will bring the return of Jesus. Now that it has been almost two thousand years since Jesus said these words, we can look back and see. There have been lots of wars. There have been lots of rumors of wars over these years. Lots of times people thought Jesus would return then. Don't be troubled. There are going to be lots of wars. There are going to be big major wars. With the wars and after the wars come famines and troubles. There will even be earthquakes, natural disasters that will cause us to expect the return of Jesus. These are just the beginnings of birth pangs. These are not the major birth pangs at the end. These are just those first small warning signs of things to come. These will continue to get worse. These things must happen but the end is not yet. The third event that will occur and greatly increase before the return of Jesus is **persecution**.

Verse 9 *"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them."* Persecutions began very soon after the ascension of Jesus into heaven. The first Christian martyr was Stephen (Acts 7:59-

60). A man named Saul was there. Later his name was changed to Paul. He began persecuting the church until his conversion (Acts 9:17-18). Afterwards, Paul himself was persecuted many times for preaching the gospel of Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). Since Christianity has spread worldwide, persecution of Christians has increased and continues to increase. Jesus told His disciples who would all be persecuted, to “*watch out for yourselves.*” Not every persecution can be prevented. When we are taken before those who do not believe in Jesus as God, we are there for a testimony to them. We are there to share God’s truth and His salvation and forgiveness available in Jesus Christ to all who believes. With all the deception, wars and persecutions, what must be done by the disciples of Jesus before Jesus returns?

Verse 10 “*And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.*” Matthew records it this way. “*But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come*” (24:13-14). When things are not going your way, when things are happening that you do not understand, keep trusting Jesus. Keep believing His truth. Do not be deceived. Do not let those persecutions change your heart and mind. Endure to the end. Jesus promised that He will save us from our sins. He has prepared for us a home in heaven (John 14:2-3). Keep sharing the gospel of Jesus.

Before the end comes, before the return of Jesus, the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. Paul was on mission to make this happen. He just did not know how big the world was. In times past there was never the possibility for the whole world to hear the gospel. Now with cell phones and internet and translation apps, it is within our reach to proclaim the gospel to all nations, tribes and peoples. The return of Jesus could happen in our lifetime. Why has God waited so long to return? “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise (to return), as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). Salvation from sin comes only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). God wants all to hear and believe the gospel.

Questions to ask yourself: Do you believe the gospel? Are you sharing the gospel?

Actions to take: Learn the gospel. Share the gospel.

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