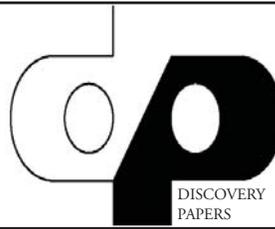


# LABOR PAINS

**SERIES: THE WAY OF THE LORD: FOLLOWING  
JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK**



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Mark 13:1-23  
39th Message  
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Mark 13 and its parallel passages in Matthew and Luke have generated much debate in scholarly circles. In short, the debate concerns when Jesus expected the events he predicted to be fulfilled. Few scholars believe that Jesus was only predicting distant-future events. Many scholars believe that Jesus was predicting only near-future events. Many other scholars believe Jesus was predicting near-future events in the first part of his discourse and distant-future events in the second part.

One scholar puts it this way: “Despite these difficulties, the big picture is fairly clear: Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, and he anticipated the coming of the Son of Man and the reign of God. How these elements fit together, if at all, and when and how he imagined these things would occur is almost wholly uncertain.”<sup>1</sup>

Although I resonate with Hill’s comments and agree that much is uncertain, I wouldn’t put it quite that way. Three factors, in particular, suggest that readers of Mark should understand Jesus as speaking of events that he expected to unfold within the lifetimes of his disciples. First, his predictions were generated by questions from his disciples as to when the temple would be destroyed. The temple was, in fact, destroyed in 70 A.D., within the lifetimes of the disciples. Second, Jesus uses the second-person plural “you” throughout. He’s speaking to his disciples, and he expects them to witness the events he predicts: “Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door” (Mark 13:29). Third, Jesus tells his disciples that “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Mark 13:30). Jesus expected the generation of his day to witness the events that he predicted.<sup>2</sup>

In my judgment, every prophecy of Jesus in Mark 13 has been fulfilled, but not every prophecy has been completely fulfilled. In other words, Jesus’ predictions are not exhausted by first century fulfillment. Other New Testament writers, especially Paul, Peter, and John use language similar to that of Jesus to predict the still-future consummation of the kingdom of God. The first century fulfillment of Mark 13, therefore, foreshadows fulfillment of a greater sort.

Part one, Mark 13:1-23, helps us look back at first-century fulfillment, and part two, Mark 13:24-37, helps us look forward to still-future fulfillment. To understand how Mark 13 applies to us today, we must first understand how it applied to the disciples of Jesus. So, strap yourself in for what some scholars call “The Little Apocalypse.” First, part one.

## The temple is doomed

Mark 13:1-4:

**As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”**

**As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”<sup>3</sup>**

Although Jesus dramatized God’s judgment against the temple by driving out the buyers and the sellers, overturning the tables of the moneychangers, and destroying a fig tree, one of his disciples nevertheless calls his attention to the temple complex. He wants Jesus to “behold” the grandeur of the temple. Jesus, however, wants his disciple to see beyond the appearance of things. He has been drawing the ministry of the temple onto himself, acting as if he has the authority to forgive sins, and he has upbraided the leadership of the temple. Jesus grants that the temple buildings are “great,” but he also called the commandments to love God and others as being “greater” than all other commandments. He commended a scribe for deeming such obedience as literally being “greater” than all the temple sacrifices. Jesus observed that a widow’s offering of two small coins to the temple was literally “great” (she literally offered “as great as she had”). The greatness of the temple buildings impresses the disciples, but the greatness that impresses Jesus consists of a sacrificial life.

The prophet Jeremiah predicted the destruction of the first temple because of Israel’s corruption (Jeremiah 7:14). Babylon, in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s words, destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. The Israelites rebuilt the temple, and it was embellished by Herod the Great. Now, Jesus, like Jeremiah before him, predicts the destruction of the rebuilt temple in light of Israel’s corruption. The temple may in fact be “wonderful,” as the disciple observed, but its beauty won’t save it.

The prophet Zechariah envisioned that the Lord would stand on the Mount of Olives to fight on behalf of Israel (Zechariah 14:3-4). Jesus, though, sits down on the Mount of Olives after pronouncing the Lord’s judgment against

Israel's temple. Jesus, indeed, is fighting Israel's greatest battle—against Satan, sin, and death—even if Israel and his disciples can't see it. Earlier, he sat down opposite the treasury and observed the greatness of the widow's offering, even though by appearances it didn't amount to much (Mark 12:41). Now, he sits down opposite the temple, having pronounced its demise despite the greatness of its appearance.

It must come as a surprise to the disciples that Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God includes the destruction of the temple. Jewish kings restored the temple; they didn't destroy it. Nevertheless, no one takes issue with Jesus; if the temple is to be destroyed, the disciples want to be ready. Four of his disciples ask Jesus when "these things"—things pertaining to the destruction of the temple—will occur. They assume that some sort of sign will alert them to the imminence of the destruction of the temple; therefore, they ask Jesus to tell them what the sign will be.<sup>4</sup>

Beginning in Mark 13:5, Jesus answers his disciples' questions about the destruction of the temple.

### The beginning of birth pangs

Mark 13:5-8:

**And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and will mislead many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs."**

The disciples want to know what to look for, but Jesus first warns them about being misled by those who come in his name—that is, claiming to be the Christ, the ultimate Jewish leader.<sup>5</sup> Messianic movements in the first century often gathered around figures who fomented revolution against Rome. Especially in this light, the disciples will "hear of wars and rumors of wars." On the one hand, Jesus, who is leading a different sort of revolution, warns his disciples against being caught up in such movements. On the other hand, he tells them not to be frightened by armed conflicts. Such conflicts, be they "messianic" or otherwise, don't signify "the end"—that is, the end of the temple, which is wrapped up in the end of the age, the fulfillment of "all these things."<sup>6</sup>

Even a conflict that rises to the level of nation vs. nation and kingdom vs. kingdom doesn't by itself signify the demise of the temple.<sup>7</sup> International conflict, earthquakes, and famines are signs of a sort, for they constitute the "beginning of birth pangs," but they don't signify the end of the temple. Jesus evidently envisions conflicts that would

eventually erupt into the Jewish-Roman war. The New Testament records both earthquakes and famines that the disciples became aware of (Mark 27:54, 28:2; Acts 11:28, 16:26). Eventually, the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, but not until 70 A.D.

If conflicts, earthquakes, and famines are the beginning of birth pangs, what sort of birth does Jesus envision? The temple will fall, yes. It has come to represent opposition to God, not worship of God (Mark 11:17). The temple must fall to make way for the new temple, Jesus and the newly constituted people of God. Through the Ten Plagues, which culminated in the exodus, God gave birth to his people, the nation of Israel. Earthquakes, famines, and war—plagues—must come, but God is giving birth to the new people of God, the international people of God: followers of Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, indwelt and animated by the Holy Spirit of God. The events of the first century—the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ; the coming of the Holy Spirit; and even the destruction of the temple—are all part of the birthing process.

In Mark 13:9-13, Jesus tells his disciples that in the days ahead they can expect not only war, famine, and earthquakes, but also persecution.

### Persecution on the horizon

Mark 13:9-13:

**"But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."**

Both Jewish nationalists who oppose Roman rule and Jewish collaborators who are complicit with it have deemed Jesus a threat, for he repudiated the agendas of both groups and called Israel to account. Soon, one of his followers would deliver him over to Jewish leaders, in whose presence he would be beaten. The Jewish leaders would then deliver him over to Pilate, the Roman governor. The disciples would make their share of enemies by endorsing Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God and proclaiming its arrival in his death and resurrection. Like Jesus, they too, even as common fishermen, can expect to be delivered over and beaten by Jewish leaders and to

stand before Gentile rulers. Such persecution, though, will create opportunities for the disciples to testify about Jesus. The kind of persecution and opportunity that Jesus predicts would come to pass, not only for his disciples but also for other followers (Acts 4:1-30, 6:8-8:3, 9:15-16, 21:27-26:1).

Before the temple is destroyed, the gospel will be preached to “all the nations”—not to every nation on the face of the earth, but to the Gentiles. Followers of Jesus scattered when they were persecuted in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). The apostle Paul preached the gospel throughout the Mediterranean. The message of Jesus’ death and resurrection spread to such an extent that Paul could later claim that the gospel had been preached “in all creation under heaven” and that it had been made known to “all the nations” (Colossians 1:23, Romans 16:25-26). The temple, after all, was supposed to be a house of prayer for “all the nations” (Mark 11:17). When Jesus’ followers took the gospel to the nations, they, as the new temple, became precisely that: a house of prayer for all the nations. Despite persecution, and in part because of it, the opportunity for the gospel will be staggering. Jesus wants his disciples to view persecution not as a threat but as an opportunity.

The disciples need to be ready for persecution, but they don’t need to think in advance of what to say to accusers and judges, for the Holy Spirit will give them the words to speak. Such is the nature of the opportunity that persecution will present. The Book of Acts records Spirit-inspired defenses of the gospel by Peter and Stephen (Acts 4:8, 7:55).

Jesus also warns his disciples that the coming convulsions—evidently in connection with the Roman-Jewish war—will divide families to such an extent that people will deliver over their own kin to death, even their own children and parents. War, of course, can cause division in families, but betrayal of kin is especially horrifying to the Jews of the day, who consider family bonds sacrosanct. Nevertheless, the disciples could find precedent for Jesus’ warning in the prophecy of Micah (Micah 7:5-6).

If the disciples face such opposition in their own families, they should not be surprised. In fact, they can expect to be “hated by all” because of their association with Jesus—not by every person, of course, but by many people and for many reasons, not least for their advocacy of Jesus’ vision of the kingdom of God, which marginalizes all other claims to power. In the face of such hatred, the disciples must persevere in their faith, for the one who endures to the end—evidently to the end of one’s life—will be saved: vindicated in God’s court.<sup>8</sup> Persecution will not only swing open a door for the gospel, it will also weed out the unfaithful.

In Mark 13:14-23, Jesus tells his disciples that persecution will escalate into a time of tribulation.

## A time of tribulation

Mark 13:14-23:

**“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that it may not happen in the winter. For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, He is there’; do not believe him; for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.”**

The disciples should be ready for international conflict, earthquakes, famines, and persecution, but up until now Jesus has not instructed them to take any special action. Now, though, Jesus advises them to flee to the mountains when they see the “abomination of desolation,” an expression that originates with the Book of Daniel (Daniel 11:31, 12:11).<sup>9</sup> In Daniel, the prophecy concerning the abomination of desolation referred to the desecration of the temple and the cessation of regular burnt offerings. The intertestamental Book of 1 Maccabees applies the language of Daniel to the actions of a pagan king, Antiochus Epiphanies, who erected a “desolating sacrilege” on the altar of burnt offering in the temple in 167 B.C. (1 Maccabees 1:54-59). Jesus advises his disciples to be on the lookout for something similar. Matthew’s account indicates that the abomination of desolation is bound up in the desolation of the temple: its abandonment and ultimate destruction (Matthew 23:38, 24:15). To modern readers, what specifically the abomination of desolation referred to remains unclear.<sup>10</sup>

When the disciples see the abomination of desolation, whatever it is, they should flee. In fact, all those in Judea should flee without haste. The necessity of flight will make it problematic for pregnant women and mothers with infants and for all if they have to flee in winter conditions.

The disciples and others in Judea must head for the hills because of the coming tribulation. Jesus, like the prophets Jeremiah and Joel, uses hyperbolic language to convey the severity of the tribulation.<sup>11</sup> The disciple who had approached Jesus literally called his attention

to “such kind” of stones, but Jesus literally alerts his disciples to “such a kind” of tribulation. Again, Jesus wants his disciples to look beyond the appearance of things to spiritual realities. Extraordinary suffering will supersede the extraordinary beauty of the temple. The severity of the coming tribulation will be such that no one would survive apart from the Lord’s intervention to bring it to an end. The Lord would, in fact, shorten the days, Jesus says, “for the sake of the elect”—so that God’s people, a remnant within Israel constituting followers of Jesus, might survive to fulfill his purposes.

At the outset of the discourse, Jesus warned his disciples not to follow those who claimed to be the Christ but who in actuality were bent on misleading Israel. Now, he anticipates that false Christs and false prophets will exploit the coming tribulation. By all appearances, the coming tribulation will involve an attack against Jerusalem representing God’s judgment against it. Just as God raised up Babylon to sack Jerusalem and destroy the temple in 586 B.C., he will raise up another power to do the same within the lifetimes of the disciples. The New Testament writers are silent about the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy, but again, the evidence of history suggests that Jesus was anticipating the Roman siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. The disciples, as Jews, might be tempted to fight for Jerusalem instead of fleeing from it, to take up arms against the pagans at the behest of false Christs and false prophets, especially if the pretenders manage to conjure up signs and wonders.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus tells his disciples that he has thoroughly prepared them for the coming events: “behold, I have told you everything in advance.” He has told them what to watch for (the abomination of desolation), what to do (flee to the mountains), and what to beware of (false Christs and false prophets). He is a true prophet and the real Christ; therefore, the disciples should trust him.

Having considered how part one of the Olivet Discourse applied to the disciples of the first century, we are now in position to understand how it applies to us today.

### **Don’t be impressed by appearance**

One of Jesus’ disciples was impressed with the wonderful stones and wonderful buildings of the temple, but those stones and buildings had not only served their purpose, they were also being misused by the populace. Furthermore, the disciples themselves were becoming the foundation of a far more wonderful temple, made not of stone and mortar but of flesh and blood (Ephesians 3:19-22).

What are we impressed with? Wonderful stones and buildings? From the tower of Babel to the recently completed tower of Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the tallest building in the world, the erection of skyscrapers has stoked the pride of men and women bent on throwing over God and making a name for themselves. What are we

impressed with? Larger-than-life personalities? Such men and women, venerated as if they were gods, often behave like gods. The recent demise of the most vaunted athlete in the world, Tiger Woods, is but the latest example. The golfer confessed that he had come to believe that “normal rules didn’t apply” to him and that he “deserved to enjoy all the temptations around me.”

Jesus’ denunciation of the temple serves as a warning to his followers in all eras against being blinded by the appearance of things. Sure, appreciate human achievement. Just know that all of it testifies to the majesty of the Creator, whether or not the achievers give him the glory. The beauty that most impresses Jesus is not that of skyscrapers or larger-than-life personalities but the beauty of a sacrificial life. In the Gospel of Mark, the temple, for all its grandeur, forms the backdrop for the offering of a poor widow, who gave all she owned, literally “her whole life.” If you want to see something beautiful, look at her—and those like her. We get distracted by the prophetic intricacies of the Olivet Discourse, and Mark says, “Take a look at the widow.”

For me, one of the great privileges of being a pastor at our church involves having a front-row seat to the lives of many of its people. I see so many of them living humbly and heroically, obediently and sacrificially. I have to say: it’s an awesome sight.

The Olivet Discourse not only sounds a warning against being impressed by the appearance of things, it also warns us to beware of false prophets.

### **Don’t fight for Jerusalem**

Jesus told his disciples not to fight for Jerusalem, which represented not worship of God but opposition to God. His words apply more or less in a direct way today. Some leaders in the American church urge their followers to support the modern state of Israel irrespective of its sins. Near as I can tell, leaders do so for two reasons: First, they believe that Scriptures command us to support ethnic Israel, and, second, they believe that the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 set the stage for the fulfillment end-time prophecies. I heard a radio preacher recently say, “The church has a moral obligation to support the nation of Israel.” Many such leaders, in the professed interest of adherence to the Scriptures, would arm the modern state of Israel so that it can hold off the Arabs and usher in the end times.

Such leaders may not be false prophets, but they are, in my judgment, mishandling the Scriptures. The church has a moral obligation not to support Israel right or wrong but to show no favoritism where right and wrong is concerned. When we stand up for justice on the one hand but show favoritism on the other, we lose our credibility. Can you imagine what it is like for non-Jewish believers in Christ in the Middle East to see their brothers and sisters in the

United States stand up for Israel while paying no heed to the suffering that Israel inflicts on them? A pastor who moved to the Bay Area from Lebanon a few years ago attends our regional pastors' meetings and tells us that the American church's uncritical support of Israel is extraordinarily hurtful to Gentile believers in that part of the world.

Today, as in the first century, we hear of wars and rumors of wars in the Middle East. Whatever conflicts may come, watch out for false prophets who exploit such tribulation. Remember, Jesus is leading a different sort of revolution, one that has nothing to do with guns and bombs and everything to do with love, prayer, and truth. Don't fight for Jerusalem with the weapons of the world; instead, fight for the kingdom of God with the weapons of the Spirit. If someone speaking in the name of Christ asks you to support the modern state of Israel, right or wrong, you should do what Jesus told his disciples to do: run. Don't fight for Jerusalem; fight for the kingdom of God. It goes without saying that the church should not lend its uncritical support to those who oppose Israel, either.

First, the Olivet Discourse warns us against being impressed by the appearance of things and encourages us to behold the beauty of an obedient and sacrificial life. Second, it warns us against fighting for Jerusalem and encourages us to fight for the kingdom of God. Finally, it teaches us about persecution.

### Consider persecution an opportunity

Most of us probably haven't experienced the kind of persecution that early followers of Jesus endured and that many of his followers in different parts of the world currently endure. When three of us from our church recently taught at a pastors' conference in India, the biblical texts on persecution were easy to teach: they applied in a straightforward way. Some of the pastors had been disowned by their families; others had been beaten for their faith; still others had been jailed. The three of us commented about the need to teach such texts more creatively in our setting. The Indians, however, told us that they were uplifted because we journeyed from the United States to teach them the Scriptures. It's important for us, as followers of Jesus in the West, which is relatively free of overt persecution, to in one way or another stand with the persecuted church. It means a lot to those facing persecution.

If you live in some parts of the world and follow Jesus, you're risking your life. If you live in the Silicon Valley and follow Jesus, you're risking much less. Nevertheless, persecution here is real, even if it takes a more subtle form. Simply put, as followers of Jesus, we're outnumbered. Being outnumbered, we might feel threatened.

Last year, my wife and I visited our daughters' classrooms in response to open invitations to parents to share their holiday traditions. We read the Christmas story from Luke 2 and sang Christmas carols in our public schools. Although we remain thankful for the opportunity we were given to share our Christmas traditions, in each case we

received a little pushback. You'd hardly call it persecution; still, I felt a little vulnerable. I couldn't help remembering that when I attended a public elementary school in Los Altos in the 1960s, each of the classes was assigned to sing Christmas carols at an all-school concert attended by parents. Times have changed.

I can complain about the change and play the victim card, or I can listen to Jesus, who tells me to expect persecution and to even consider it an opportunity for the gospel. Because we are outnumbered in the Silicon Valley, the opportunity for the gospel is staggering. If the climate seems more resistant than opportune, remember that Jesus sends his Holy Spirit to help us. We can't say for sure when, or how often, the Spirit speaks through us, but we can be sure, in one way or another, that he will empower us. The Spirit, who dwells in us, convicts the world of truth (John 16:8).

However we're received, or however we're persecuted, it matters not what transpires in the court of public opinion. Those who persevere to the end will be vindicated in the heavenly court, the only one that counts.

### Predictive and pastoral

The labor pains of the first century resulted in the destruction of the old temple and the birth of the new temple: the renewed people of God. In the first century, God gave birth to us. Jesus' words in Mark 13 are predictive, yes, but they are predictive for the sake of being pastoral. He is the good shepherd who, out of compassion for us, teaches us many things (Mark 6:34). In part one of the Olivet Discourse, we learn from Jesus the following:

Don't be impressed by the appearance of things; instead, behold the beauty of a sacrificial life. Don't fight for Jerusalem; instead, fight for the kingdom of God. Don't be intimidated by persecution; instead, consider persecution an opportunity.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Craig C. Hill, *In God's Time* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 165.

<sup>2</sup> Some interpreters take "this generation" to mean some future generation. The context of the Olivet Discourse, including Matthew's usage of the phrase "this generation" immediately preceding his version, suggests that the words should be taken as referring to the generation of the disciples, not some future generation (Matthew 23:34-36).

<sup>3</sup> Literary structure:

Introduction:

A: Jesus predicted destruction of temple (1-2).

A' Disciples: When? (3-4)

A "See to it that no one misleads you" / "Many will come in my name" (5-6)

B "When you hear of wars ... do not be frightened" (7-10)

X "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry" (11-13)

B' "But when you see the abomination of desolation ... flee to the mountains" (14-20)

A' Don't believe false Christs and false prophets who would lead astray elect / "But take heed" (21-23)

<sup>4</sup> Matthew reports that the disciples asked Jesus, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). Still, their questions, as Matthew reports them, relate

to the destruction of the temple. Grammatically, the questions concerning Jesus' coming and the end of the age are linked by a single article and should therefore be seen as connected to the same event. In Mark, Jesus answers the questions concerning the destruction of the temple in part by predicting the coming of the Son of Man. Therefore, the "coming" of Jesus is wrapped up in the destruction of the temple (see Mark 13:24-27). The end of the age in Matthew does not refer to the absolute end of the final age but to the dethronement of the evil powers in Jerusalem. Paul could say that "the ends of the ages" had already come upon his generation (1 Corinthians 10:11). Likewise, the writer of Hebrews said that Christ came at "the consummation of the ages" (Hebrews 9:26).

<sup>5</sup> Mark reports that Jesus envisions deceivers proclaiming, "Behold, here is the Christ" (Mark 13:21). When Jesus says that many will come in his name, the name he has in mind is evidently that of the Christ.

<sup>6</sup> In the context of Mark, the "end" would seem to be the end of the temple. In Matthew, the end also constitutes the end of the age (Matthew 24:3-5). The first century advent of Christ marked the end of an old age and the breaking in of a new age. The prophet Ezekiel uses similar terminology to predict "the end," not the end of the world, but the near-term end of the state of affairs in the land of Israel (Ezekiel 7:1-9).

<sup>7</sup> See 2 Chronicles 15:6 for similar language in reference to events before Christ.

<sup>8</sup> In light of Mark's earlier use of "the end" in verse 7 in connection with the end of the temple, he may intend for us to understand "the end" in verse 13 along similar lines.

<sup>9</sup> The meaning of the phrase "let the reader understand" is uncertain. Some scholars believe that it alerted readers to the origin of the abomination of desolation in the Book of Daniel.

<sup>10</sup> In general, scholars are divided on whether the sacrilege was by Jewish Zealots who took over the temple or by Romans who destroyed it. Ezekiel employs similar language in speaking of the atrocities of the Jews (Ezekiel 7-8). Luke, in his account, leaves out the reference to the abomination of desolation and adds that a signal for departure will be armies—evidently, Roman armies—surrounding Jerusalem (Luke 21:20).

<sup>11</sup> Jesus is not literally saying that the coming tribulation will be unprecedented or that nothing like it will ever occur again any more than Jeremiah and Joel were literally saying such things in connection with the suffering that they predicted (Jeremiah 30:7, Joel 2:2). The Book of Exodus uses similar language (Exodus 15:6).

<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Deuteronomy 13:1-3 warned about the possibility of a "prophet or a dreamer" demonstrating "a sign or a wonder" in order to lead Israel astray.