

called the elect because God has chosen (“elected”) them to be his. This sovereign choice stretches back into time immemorial ([Eph. 1:4](#)). While God’s sovereign will does not negate the need for true human repentance and faith, the Bible teaches that such repentance and faith are themselves the effect (not the cause) of God’s providential working. Our salvation is a gift of grace from first to last.

### Personal Implications

Take time to reflect on the implications of [Mark 13:1–37](#) for your own life today. Note the personal implications for your walk with the Lord regarding (1) the Gospel Glimpses, (2) the Whole-Bible Connections, (3) the Theological Soundings, and (4) this passage as a whole.

1. Gospel Glimpses
2. Whole-Bible Connections
3. Theological Soundings
4. [Mark 13:1–37](#)

### As You Finish This Unit . . .

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord’s blessing and help as you continue in this study of Mark. Also look back through this unit of study, to reflect on a few key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and to take note of these things to review again in the future.

## Jesus and the Coming Judgment

### Mark 13:1–37

18/19 June

### The Place of the Passage

Jesus’ public ministry is drawing to a close. He has made a final entrance into Jerusalem. He knows his death is imminent. Before eating the Passover one last time with his disciples and going to the cross, he teaches his disciples about events to come, both on the immediate horizon and in the distant future. His purpose is to focus the attention of the disciples on preparedness for troubles, on readiness to suffer, and on trust.

### The Big Picture

Blending warning with comforting, Jesus prepares his disciples in [Mark 13:1–37](#) for future hardships and temptations after he is gone.

### Reflection and Discussion

Read through the complete passage for this study, [Mark 13:1–37](#). Then review the following questions and write your own notes on them concerning this phase of Jesus’ life and ministry. (For further background, see the ESV Study Bible, pages 1922–1926, available online at [www.esvbible.org](http://www.esvbible.org).)

Herod the Great had enlarged the second temple to about double the size of the temple Solomon had built, and the disciples marvel at the beauty of it in [Mark 13:1](#). How does Jesus respond? Could it be that Jesus has more in mind than merely physical destruction of the temple? Bear in mind [Mark 14:58](#) and [Mark 15:38](#) in considering your answer.

In response to Jesus’ statement about the future destruction of the temple ([Mark 13:2](#)), the disciples ask him, “When will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” Jesus’ answer deals primarily with the second part of their question (“what will be the sign”), but he also addresses the timing of the coming events (“when”). [Mark 13:5–23](#) focus on local and world events (destruction of the temple, persecution, and universal evangelism); [Mark 13:24–27](#) focus on cosmic events (the transformation of the known cosmos and the coming of the Son of Man). The disciples assume that the destruction of the temple will coincide with the end of time, but Jesus corrects their thinking ([Mark 13:7, 13](#)). As you glance over [Mark 13:4–37](#), what do you think might be the central point Jesus wants to get across?

In [Mark 13:9–13](#), identify three hardships Jesus foretells and three comforts he provides as he encourages his disciples to be faithful witnesses to the nations.

The “abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be” ([Mark 13:14](#)) probably refers to Rome coming in AD 70 and destroying the temple—a place Gentiles were not to enter. In light of the importance of the temple to Mark, which we have traced throughout our study of this Gospel, reflect on the significance of the destruction of the temple. What would it mean to a first-century Jew?

The events described throughout [Mark 13:14–23](#) likely refer not only to the destruction of the temple but also, in an anticipatory way, to events more distant in the future having to do with the end of world history. What clues in the text lead us to this conclusion?

In [Mark 13:24–27](#) Jesus broadens his vision to focus on cosmic events in the more distant future than the tribulation he has been describing in [Mark 13:14–23](#). Read [Joel 2:10, 31](#) and [Daniel 7:13](#), and consider the broader contexts (surrounding verses) of both of these Old Testament texts. How does Jesus refer to them, and what is the significance of such references?

Some have understood Jesus’ illustration of the fig tree in [Mark 13:28](#) as a symbol for the nation of Israel (remember [Mark 11:12–26](#)). It is more likely, however, that in this case Jesus is just using a familiar event in nature as another illustration. What is the point of this illustration?

Jesus says that “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” ([Mark 13:30](#)). This has perplexed interpreters, because it seems clear that at various points in [Mark 13](#) Jesus has in mind the end of history, yet the “generation” to which Jesus refers would presumably have died out sometime in the first century. Perhaps by “this generation” Jesus has in mind “this evil generation” that will remain until Christ returns (cf. [Matt. 12:45](#); [Luke 11:29](#)), or perhaps it refers to “this generation of believers” throughout the entire Christian age. Another option is that this is a prediction with multiple fulfillments. Whatever the precise meaning of Jesus’ words, we know that his “words will not pass away” ([Mark 13:31](#)). Jesus is assuring his people of his wise oversight of human history, despite hardships for his followers.

Throughout [Mark 13](#), Jesus emphasizes three things about future events. We can summarize them with three *i*’s: imminence, interval, and ignorance. Christ’s final return is *imminent*—we must always be ready for it. Christ’s return will come, however, after an *interval* of various events. And we are all ignorant of the precise time he will return. Where in [Mark 13](#) do you see each of these three *i*’s?

Read through the following three sections on Gospel Glimpses, Whole-Bible Connections, and Theological Soundings. Then take time to reflect on the Personal Implications this passage from Mark may have for your walk with the Lord.

### Gospel Glimpses

**THE IRONIC REVERSAL.** “They will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues . . .” ([Mark 13:9](#)). The shock of this prediction by Jesus is that it is God’s people, the Jews, the people of which Jesus was a part and to whom he came ([John 1:11](#)), who will persecute Jesus’ disciples. The “councils” and “synagogues” are Jewish locales. Meanwhile, the gospel will “be proclaimed to all nations” ([Mark 13:10](#)). The insiders reject the gospel; the outsiders hear it and, as often in Mark’s Gospel, receive it (e.g., [Mark 7:24–30](#); [15:39](#)). Such is the nature of the gospel. One reason for this is that it is those who know their need who will respond to the gospel; those who believe they are already “insiders” often fail to feel their need for the gospel.

**CHOSEN IN GRACE.** “But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose . . .” ([Mark 13:20](#)). Believers are those whom God chose. This does not mean we do not choose God. We do. But our choosing of him is rooted in his even deeper choosing of us (cf. [1 John 4:19](#)). This

divine choosing is solely on terms of grace. God does not choose those who “make the cut” in some way—morally, socially, intellectually. Instead, “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong” ([1 Cor. 1:27](#)).

### Whole-Bible Connections

**GOOD NEWS FOR GENTILES.** Jesus says that “the gospel must . . . be proclaimed to all nations” ([Mark 13:10](#)). On the one hand, the call to bring the gospel to the nations explodes in a new way in the New Testament. Think, for example, of Paul, the “apostle to the Gentiles” ([Rom. 11:13](#); cf. [Gal. 2:8](#); the same Greek word translated “Gentiles” here and elsewhere is used for “nations” in [Mark 13:10](#)). On the other hand, the call to bring the blessing of God to all peoples goes all the way back to the first book of the Bible. When God first called Abram, he declared that Abram would be a blessing to the other nations ([Gen. 12:2–3](#)). One of Israel’s failures was the failure to bless the nations (see [Jer. 4:1–2](#)). At the end of all things, [Mark 13:10](#) is fulfilled and “the nations walk” in the New Jerusalem and “the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it” ([Rev. 21:24](#)).

**THE SUN AND THE MOON.** In [Genesis 1](#), God created “two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night” ([Gen. 1:16](#)). Throughout the Old Testament, the sun came to represent God’s favor and blessing ([Ps. 72:17](#); [84:11](#); [136:8](#)). Judgment over godless nations was likewise described in terms of the sun and the moon ceasing to give light ([Isa. 13:10](#); [Ezek. 32:7](#)). Due to Israel’s repeated faithlessness, the prophets spoke of a coming day when even for Israel the sun would become dark ([Joel 2:10, 30–31](#)). Jesus picked up on this language in [Mark 13](#), saying that in the tribulation “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light” ([Mark 13:24](#)). Judgment will come.

### Theological Soundings

**ESCHATOLOGY.** The word eschatology means “last things” and refers to what Christians believe about the end times. From one perspective eschatology refers to the present, because the New Testament shows repeatedly that the ancient hopes and longings of the Old Testament have already decisively begun in Jesus and the church even if they are not yet fully completed. In considering eschatology as it surfaces in [Mark 13](#), however, we are referring mainly to the end of history, when Jesus will come again. We learn in [Mark 13](#) several important things about the second coming of Christ, including: (1) he will come “with great power and glory” ([Mark 13:26](#)); (2) the elect (chosen) will be mercifully spared when Christ returns ([Mark 13:20, 27](#)); (3) there will be signs indicating that the end is near ([Mark 13:28–29](#)); (4) no one knows when Jesus will come ([Mark 13:32](#)); and (5) believers must be vigilant and ready for Jesus to come at any time ([Mark 13:33–36](#)).

**ELECTION.** Three times in [Mark 13](#) Jesus refers to “the elect,” or “the chosen ones” ([Mark 13:20, 22, 27](#)). The Bible teaches that God is sovereign over all things, including the actions of human beings as moral agents, and yet moral agents are also responsible for their actions. God’s sovereignty does not cancel out human responsibility, and human responsibility does not mitigate God’s sovereignty. Both are true, even if our finite minds cannot fully comprehend how they fit together. One way the Bible underscores God’s sovereignty is by speaking of believers, as Jesus does in [Mark 13](#), as “the elect.” They are