

Follow – Walking in the Way of Jesus

Understanding the Times

Mark 13:9-23

Pastor Ben Hall – Saanich Baptist Church

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There's a difference between UNDERSTANDING the TIMES and PREDICTING the FUTURE. When reading Scripture we must be careful not to interpret prophecy literally or history figuratively.

Mark 13:9-15 — The passage balances two IMPERATIVES:

Disciples must resist both DECEPTION and DESPAIR, holding firm regardless of circumstances. The passage moves from personal persecution to cosmic upheaval, yet maintains that these warnings remain relevant wherever evil follows the pattern Jesus describes.



The Abomination of Desolation

- The “abomination of desolation” is closely tied to the Roman desecration and destruction of Jerusalem.
- Jesus is warning disciples about an imminent historical catastrophe.

Already/Not Yet — Day of the Lord & Armageddon

- The DAY of the LORD
 - The day of the Lord is past, for Christ has died and Christ has risen.
 - The day of the Lord is present, for Christ makes himself to reign on this earth through the preaching of the gospel.
 - The day of the Lord is future, for Christ will come again.
- ARMAGEDDON
 - Armageddon is Calvary.
 - Armageddon is every conquest of the gospel as it shines into this darkened world.
 - Armageddon will be the final putting down of this evil age and its deceitful master.

PERSECUTION is the work of the devil: ***You did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells (Revelation 2:13, RSV).***

GOSPEL FLUENCY: The ability to INTERPRET suffering, uncertainty, and opposition through the PROMISES of God rather than through the circumstances of life. The more fluent we become in the gospel, the more resilient we become in tribulation.

Assessment - Where do you instinctively seek peace, control, or security when life becomes difficult?

Application - Ask: “If this were taken away, would I still believe Christ is enough?”

Practice - Repent not merely of sinful behaviors, but of misplaced trust.

Assessment- Can you identify a specific promise of God that is sustaining your faith right now?

Application - When facing tribulation ask: “What has God promised that this circumstance cannot take away?”

Practice - Develop the habit of responding to every fear with a promise.

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Series: Follow

Title: Understanding the Times

Primary Passage: Mark 13:9-23

Secondary Passage: 1 John 4:4

Big Question: How can Christians endure tribulation without falling into deception or despair?

Big Idea: Gospel fluency enables faithful endurance because it teaches us to interpret suffering, uncertainty, and opposition through the promises of God rather than through our circumstances.

Keywords: Time, Scientific Method, Interpretation, Prediction, Tribulation, Trial, Endurance, Abomination, Persecution, Satan, Gospel, Power.

When you experience uncertainty, conflict, disappointment, or bad news, what is your typical response: Trying to control things, withdrawing, worrying, fixing, praying, or something else?

- What situations currently feel uncertain or outside your control?
- What tends to steal your peace most quickly?
- Who has modeled faithful endurance for you?

According to Mark 13:9-23, what dangers does Jesus prepare His disciples to face? Why do you think Jesus spends more time preparing His disciples to endure than helping them predict the future?

- What examples of deception or despair do you see in this passage?
- How does the 'already/not yet' understanding of God's Kingdom help us make sense of Jesus' warnings?

What do these verses teach us about God's character and His purposes during times of suffering? What encouragement do you find in Jesus' warnings?

- How does God's sovereignty provide comfort without eliminating hardship?

What do difficult circumstances tend to reveal about our hearts? When life becomes difficult, where do you instinctively seek peace, control, or security?

- What are some common false refuges people turn to instead of Christ?
- Why is suffering often such an effective revealer of misplaced trust?

What promise of God is sustaining your faith right now? What fear, anxiety, disappointment, or uncertainty are you currently facing?

- How would your outlook change if you interpreted your situation through that promise?

What would faithful endurance look like in your life this week?

- Is there an area where God may be calling you to repent of misplaced trust?
- What practical step could help you become more fluent in the promises of the gospel?
- Which promise of God do you need to intentionally rehearse this week?

Share one challenge or uncertainty you are currently facing. Share one promise of God that you are choosing to trust.