

## Lesson Eleven

(Mark 13:9 - 14:31)

### Strength and Patience

(Mark 13:9-23)

**9** “You yourselves must watch out. You will be arrested and taken to court. You will be beaten in the synagogues; you will stand before rulers and kings for my sake, to tell them the Good News. **10** The gospel must first be preached to all peoples. **11** And when they arrest you and take you to court, do not worry ahead of time about what you are going to say; when the time comes, say whatever is given to you then. For the words you speak will not be yours; they will come from the Holy Spirit. **12** Men will hand over their own brothers to be put to death, and fathers will do the same to their children; children will turn against their parents and have them put to death. **13** Everyone will hate you because of me. But whoever holds out to the end will be saved.”

**14** “You will see ‘The Awful Horror’ standing in the place where he should not be.” (Note to the reader: understand what this means!) “Then those who are in Judea must run away to the hills. **15** The man who is on the roof of his house must not lose time by going down into the house to get anything to take with him. **16** The man who is in the field must not go back to the house for his cloak. **17** How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant, and for mothers, who have little babies! **18** Pray to God that these things will not happen in wintertime! **19** For the trouble of those days will be far worse than any the world has ever known, from the very beginning when God created the world until the present time. Nor will there ever again be anything like it. **20** But the Lord has reduced the number of those days; if he had not, nobody would survive. For the sake of his chosen people, however, he has reduced those days.

**21** “Then, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ -- do not believe him. **22** For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear. They will perform signs and wonders for the purpose of deceiving God’s chosen people, if possible. **23** Be on your guard! I have told you everything ahead of time.”

The lesson of the first part of chapter 13 is: “Don’t let anyone fool you.” The lessons of the second part is: “Hold out to the end!” The disciples must not allow the *signs of the times* to mislead them and turn them away from Christ. It is also very important that they hold out to the end no matter how difficult circumstances become and no matter how much it may look like the cause is lost! (The events of the *cross and resurrection* would be Christ’s victory over Satan.) The disintegration of the Jewish Nation would be a severe trial for the Jewish Christians. Their own relatives would accuse them to persecute them. Compare Matt. 10:34-39; 1 Thess. 2:14-16. Every synagogue had three men with the authority to punish, and Christians who had been at first tolerated, would be beaten by them. The persecution would bring some before rulers and kings (such as Felix, Festus, Gallio, Agrippa, Nero, etc.) and give them the opportunity to speak the message of Christ to them. Compare Acts 26:19-29; 28:16-20. “Witness” in the New Testament is always used in the legal sense of “to give evidence; to furnish proof.” The correct meaning in verse nine is: “to tell them the Good News.” Verse ten is probably parallel to the thought in Romans 11:25. *The gospel must be*

*preached to all peoples* -- the full number of Gentiles must be called into the Kingdom -- the Jewish leaders would continue their suicidal opposition to God -- and then the end did come. The gospel was preached, as Paul shows us (Col. 1:23). The miraculous gifts from the Spirit granted *instant maturity* which helped make it possible to do and say the right thing to best seize the opportunity of the moment. When all these things had been accomplished, and Jerusalem destroyed, the unbelieving Jewish people as a persecuting force were no longer a threat to the Christian religion.

The “Awful Horror” (“desolating sacrilege,” RSV) is clearly the Roman armies, as Luke shows us. The prophecy of Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 was considered fulfilled by Antiochus of Syria in 168 B.C., as recorded in 1 Maccabees 1:54 (“*On the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred and forty-fifth year, king Antiochus set up the abominable idol of desolation upon the altar of God. . .*”) The idol was the statue of Jupiter Olympius. Now a further fulfillment is prophesied, and Luke 21:20 tells us it will be Jerusalem (the Holy City) surrounded by armies. The Roman armies of Cestius Gallus surrounded Jerusalem in 66-67 A.D., then went back to Caesarea. This was the signal to the Christian Jews, who immediately escaped to Pella in the north of Perea. Not one Christian Jew lost his life in the siege of Jerusalem!

Floods would come in winter making travel impossible. The city gates would be closed and locked on the Sabbath, and no one could get out. History records that the surrounding of the city by the Romans, and the panic that caused their sudden pullback, took place on a Tuesday in October. So the prayers of the Christians were answered. But for the unbelieving Jews trapped in the city, conditions were unbelievable. (When the final stage of the siege began with the Roman armies under Titus, the Jews had come from all over the world to be at Jerusalem for Passover. The previous retreat of the Roman armies had made them feel God was protecting them and they were invincible.) As the Romans stood outside Jerusalem, civil war raged among the people inside! They destroyed their own food supplies and they killed each other. And even while all this was happening, false messiahs and false prophets told lies to the people in the city. Josephus says that as Titus viewed the putrid bodies and the blood flowing around them, he groaned heavily, and raising his hands, called God to witness that it was none of his work. These were the “days of punishment” as Luke calls them. But God in His mercy did not destroy all the unbelieving Jewish people. One million one hundred thousand were killed, and one hundred thousand sold as slaves.

### **The Coming of the Son of Man**

*(Mark 13:24-37)*

**24** “*In the days after that time of trouble the sun will grow dark, the moon will no longer shine, 25 the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers in space will be driven from their courses. 26 Then the Son of Man will appear, coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 He will send out the angels to the four corners of the earth and gather God’s chosen people from one end of the world to the other.*”

**28** “*Let the fig tree teach you a lesson. When its branches become green and tender, and it starts putting out leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 In the same way, when you see these things happening, you will know that the time is near, ready to*

begin. **30** Remember this! All these things will happen before the people now living have all died. **31** Heaven and earth will pass away; my words will never pass away.”

**32** “No one knows, however, when that day or hour will come -- neither angels in heaven, nor the Son; only the Father knows. **33** Be on watch, be alert, for you do not know when the time will be. **34** It will be like a man who goes away from home on a trip and leaves his servants in charge, each one with his own work to do; and he tells the doorkeeper to keep watch. **35** Watch, then, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming -- it might be in the evening, or at midnight, or before dawn, or at sunrise. **36** If he comes suddenly, he must not find you asleep. **37** What I say to you, then, I say to all: Watch!”

The first part of this difficult passage must be understood according to verse 30 -- which puts it at the time of the siege. Then this must refer to a “spiritual coming” of Jesus, rather than the Second Coming at the end of time. This ties in with what Peter says about judgment beginning with God’s own people (see 1 Pet. 4:17-18). A. B. Bruce writes in the *Expositor’s Greek Testament*: “It seems to me that in true prophetic Oriental style the colossal imagery of the physical universe is used to describe the political and social consequences of the great Jewish catastrophe: national ruin, breaking up of religious institutions and social order. The physical stands for the social, the shaking of heaven for the shaking of earth (Haggai 2:6); or in the prophetic imagination the two are indissolubly blended: stars, thrones, city walls, temples, effete religions tumbling down into one vast mass of ruin.”

The “lesson of the fig tree” shows that there would be *signs* pointing to the things Jesus predicted about the doom of Jerusalem. Josephus says: “At one time, when a star very like a sword stood above the city, as also a comet that continued to be seen a whole year, at another, when before the rebellion and the commotion that preceded the war, whilst the people were collected at the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth of the month of April, about the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone around the altar and the temple, as to seem a bright day. To the ignorant this appeared a good omen, but by the scribes it was immediately judged to refer to the events that took place at the issue.” Josephus tells much more about these signs.

*But Jesus seems to say that no signs will show the end of the world is near!* In verse 35 he says, “Watch, then, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming. . .” It will be like a “thief in the night,” at a time completely unsuspected. Jesus says in verse 32: “No one knows, however, when that day or hour will come -- neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; only the Father knows.” So we must make a careful distinction between the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 A.D.) which the “fig tree” was pointing toward; and the end of time, which only the Father knows. *This is all that is revealed!* Jesus says nothing about any future age of “millennium.” He gives no encouragement to speculate about the fate of unbelievers (that is, in this prediction). Even though Jesus stood in his human body, and he said he did not know the day or hour of his coming, he did know that what he had prophesied was all part of God’s final intervention in history. *Therefore, be prepared. Watch, he says, he must not find you asleep.*

What difference does a belief in the second coming of Christ make to the life of a Christian??? Isn’t it enough simply to have the fact of his living presence with us???

The question is always raised: “*He promised to come, didn’t he? Where is he?*” (2 Pet. 3:4). We can imagine Peter saying something like this: “Do not listen to those who say the fact that Christ has not come yet proves he will not come at all. God is not limited by time as we are, and both one day and a thousand years are the same thing to him!” God delays until his purpose is completed (compare Rev. 6:9-11). Oecuminius writes: “The time of the end is deferred, that the number of them who are saved may be filled up.” *You should always be prepared for the Lord to come!!!*

### **The Plot Against Jesus**

*(Mark 14:1-11)*

**14** *It was now two days before the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were looking for a way to arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death. 2 “We must not do it during the feast,” they said, “or the people might riot.”*

*3 Jesus was in the house of Simon the leper, in Bethany; while he was eating, a woman came in with an alabaster jar full of a very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus’ head. 4 Some of the people there became angry, and said to each other, “What was the use of wasting the perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than three hundred dollars, and the money given to the poor!” And they criticized her harshly.*

*6 But Jesus said, “Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me. 7 You will always have poor people with you, and any time you want to you can help them. But I shall not be with you always. 8 She did what she could; she poured perfume on my body to prepare it ahead of time for burial. 9 Now, remember this! Wherever the gospel is preached, all over the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”*

*10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went off to the chief priests in order to hand Jesus over to them. 11 They were greatly pleased to hear what he had to say, and promised to give him money. So Judas started looking for a good chance to betray Jesus.*

With the long prediction of chapter 13, Jesus’ ministry to the people and to his disciples had come to a close. Now we see events moving swiftly to their climax. The question for the Jewish leaders was not *whether* to kill Jesus, but how and when. They believe their problem is solved when Judas *volunteers* to help them capture Jesus quietly and so avoid the confrontation with the people that they feared (see verse two).

The chronology of these days is very complicated. Part of this is due to the Jewish custom of counting the new day from 6 p.m. Thus Sunday began for them at 6 p.m. *Saturday* by our way of counting, and there was a six-hour overlap. Also there is a three year error in the calendar which we use. Therefore Jesus made his Triumphant Entry on Sunday, April 2, 30 A.D. The second cleansing of the temple took place on Monday, April 3, 30 A.D. Jesus was crucified Friday morning, April 7, 30 A.D., and rose from the grave Sunday morning, April 9, 30 A.D. The feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread were closely linked together. Since it had become the custom to eat only unleavened bread the day *before* the Passover, this may have been considered the beginning of the feast. (This would explain the statement in verse 12.) Alford believes

Jesus ate the Passover on Thursday (a day early) and died on Friday about the time the Passover lambs were being killed (compare John 19:14).

Mark gives us the anointing at Bethany out of sequence. It had already taken place the previous Saturday, April 1, 30 A.D. (see John 12:1). The woman is Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha (see John 12:1-7). This anointing is to be carefully separated from the one mentioned in Luke 7:36-50 (the woman there was a “sinner”). Only a person of wealth could have done what Mary did. The perfume was worth more than three hundred silver coins. (This would be equivalent to 300 day’s wages in the current job market since, in the ancient world, a silver coin was a day’s wage to a worker.) Thus the value of the perfume was equal to three hundred working days! Viewed in this context, it seemed like an extravagant act. Why does Mark mention this? Probably to help account for what Judas did. This was the last straw as far as that person was concerned! John points out that it was Judas who complained the loudest about this “waste.” Luke 22:3-6 implies that it may have been Judas’ anger at losing the money which the perfume represented which caused him to go to the chief priests and offer to betray Jesus. John 12:6 points out that Judas was a thief. (His character prepared him to be the one who would *volunteer* to betray Jesus.)

We do not know whether Mary was aware of the full meaning of what she was doing. Jesus views her action as a “fine and beautiful thing.” It was an act of devotion to Him personally. But Jesus also sees it as an anointing in preparation for His burial (compare John 19:40). The fact that Jesus makes special mention of this act, and said the fame of it will spread “all over the world,” shows that it has special meaning. Notice that Jesus measured the moral quality of the act by Mary’s *motive*; the disciples measured by its seeming usefulness (as they judged by their own standards).

### **Jesus Eats the Passover Meal**

*(Mark 14:12-21)*

*12 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the day the lambs for the Passover meals were killed, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and get your Passover meal ready?”*

*13 Then Jesus sent two of them out with these instructions: “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him 14 to the house he enters, and say to the owner of the house: ‘The Teacher says, Where is my room where my disciples and I will eat the Passover meal?’ 15 Then he will show you a large upstairs room, fixed up and furnished, where you will get everything ready for us.”*

*16 The disciples left, went to the city, and found everything just as Jesus had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.*

*17 When it was evening, Jesus came with the twelve disciples. 18 While they were at the table eating, Jesus said, “I tell you this: one of you will betray me -- one who is eating with me.”*

*19 The disciples were upset and began to ask him, one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, do you?”*

*20 Jesus answered, “It will be one of you twelve, one who dips his bread in the dish with me. 21 The Son of Man will die as the Scriptures say he will; but how terrible*

*for that man who will betray the Son of Man! It would have been better for that man if he had never been born!"*

Abbott gives this as the probable order of events (the Gospels do not always list things in the precise sequence). Jesus sends two of his disciples with directions to prepare the Passover meal for himself and the twelve (Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13). When it is evening, they meet at the place, and an argument breaks out over who will be the most important (Luke 22:24-30). Christ rebukes their argument by washing their feet as an example of humility (John 13:1-20). Then all take their places at the table (Matt. 26:20). Christ predicts his betrayal (Matt. 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:27-30). Judas learns that his treachery is known, and goes out to do it (John 13:27-30). The interrupted meal now continues and climaxes with the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). Either during or just after this meal, Jesus gives them the instructions and the prayer of John Ch. 14 to 17.

Many scholars believe Jesus ate the Passover on Thursday, a day early, and that he died at the same time the Passover lambs were being killed. This seems to be a contradiction, yet they think it is necessary to harmonize with John's Gospel. (Alford spends five columns of print discussing the matter.) The unleavened bread was prepared on Thursday (Nisan 13), and this was considered the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Mark plainly says that the apostles prepared the last supper on "the day the lambs for the passover meals were killed." There really is no need for any theories about a different day for Jesus and his disciples to eat the Passover.

A "sign" would identify the man who owned the house. McGarvey thinks it was done this way so that Judas would not know the location in time to tell the Jewish leaders. The upper room may link with the one mentioned in Acts Ch. 1, and could be Mary's house (Acts 12:12), the mother of John Mark, an established center for the disciples (see Mark 14:51-52). This Passover would be especially important to Jesus and his disciples. Note the room was "fixed up and furnished," and the disciples need only prepare the Passover meal. The meal began with a giving of thanks. Then Jesus interrupts with the shocking words: "*One of you will betray me.*" No one questions the truth of this prophecy. No one accuses someone else. Each asks: "*Surely you don't mean me, do you?*" Jesus answers, "*It will be . . . one who dips . . .*" But he said this quietly to John alone (see John 13:23-29). Matthew shows Judas identifying himself (Matt. 26:25), and this also must have been spoken quietly, or the others would have mobbed Judas. The meal must have taken place in a context of tension and suspicion, all the more grievous because it meant the breaking up of the fellowship of the Holy Meal (compare Psalm 41:9; John 13:18).

The New Testament does not speculate on the reason why Judas did what he did. Scripture prophesied the way God had appointed for the Son of Man to follow. Note that at the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about this coming death at Jerusalem (see Luke 9:31). Yet this in no way takes away the guilt nor diminishes the responsibility of the one who chose of his own free will to betray him. "*It would have been better for that man if he had never been born*" is a proverbial statement showing the doom of the person who refused God's mercy. *Divine sovereignty* and *human responsibility* are brought together here in a way that denies the reality of neither but simply states the mystery of their interface. It is more important to see how Jesus freely

chose to follow the mission which God gave him. *The highest use of free will is to do the will and purpose of God!*

## **The Lord's Supper**

*(Mark 14:22-31)*

*22 While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, "Take it," he said, "this is my body."*

*23 Then he took the cup, gave thanks to God, and handed it to them; and they all drank from it. 24 Jesus said, "This is my blood which is poured out for many, my blood which seals God's covenant. 25 I tell you, I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God."*

*26 Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.*

*27 Jesus said to them, "All of you will run away and leave me, because the scripture says, 'God will kill the shepherd and the sheep will all be scattered,' 28 But after I am raised to life I will go to Galilee ahead of you."*

*29 Peter answered, "I will never leave you, even though all the rest do!"*

*30 "Remember this!" Jesus said to Peter, "Before the rooster crows two times tonight, you will say three times that you do not know me."*

*31 Peter answered even more strongly, "I will never say I do not know you, even if I have to die with you!"*

*And all the disciples said the same thing.*

Jesus is himself the fulfillment of the Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). In the context of the Passover meal, Jesus instituted a new Holy Meal which supersedes the Passover meal. The normal sequence of the Passover meal was: 1) to begin with a blessing and prayer, followed by a dish of bitter herbs (such as horseradish) and sauce and the first of four cups of wine; 2) the history of the Passover was given, Psalm 113 was sung, and a second cup of wine was drunk; 3) after a prayer of thanks, the main meal of roast lamb with unleavened bread (such as matzos) was eaten, and after a further prayer, the third cup of wine was drunk; 4) Psalms 114-118 were sung, and the fourth cup of wine was drunk.

Mark does not mention the symbolism and ceremony of Passover, but concentrates on how Jesus used certain elements of the meal (unleavened bread eaten with the lamb, and the third cup of wine) to institute a formal religious rite (a "sacrament") to be perpetually *celebrated* by his church. He took a piece of bread (*bread* and *loaf* are the same word in Greek), gave a prayer of thanks (*eucharistos* means both a "giving of thanks" and a "blessing"), broke it, and gave it to his disciples. "*Take it, this is my body*" (the KJV adds, *eat*) is certainly symbolic, since Jesus himself stands before them as he says this. The Jews said of the Passover lamb: "*This is the body of the lamb which our fathers ate in Egypt.*" Jesus had in mind the fact that he was being offered in sacrifice like the Passover lamb on behalf of the disciples (see 1 Cor. 11:24). The wine symbolizes the bloody-death of Jesus. (Note Christians were forbidden to drink blood, Acts 15:29, so the "fruit of the grape" is symbolic, rather than literal, blood.) Three thoughts are bound up with it. First, it is "*my blood,*" the blood of the Servant of God

who lays down his life to redeem *many* people -- that is, for all people (Isa. 53:12; Mark 10:45; Heb. 9:15). Christ's blood was *poured out* as an unlimited sacrifice, which must be seized through faith (see Rom. 5:17-19). Second, it is the blood which "*seals God's covenant.*" That is, the *blood* of Christ's own sacrifice was substituted for the blood of *every other sacrifice* (Heb. 10:9). The disciples symbolically eat the body and drink the blood of the *sacrifice* in which God and man were made friends again (i.e., reconciled). Third, it is *covenant* blood (compare Exod. 24:8), symbolic of the *new covenant* which Jeremiah prophesied (see Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-13).

Jesus makes a vow in verse 25, in which he looks forward to the full coming of the kingdom of God. This would only be possible through his death (compare John 7:39). The supper is a foretaste of the holy meal (Lord's Supper) in which "*you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*" (1 Cor. 11:26). This Holy Meal is both a memorial of Christ-on-the-cross, and a prediction of the future. The "*new wine*" in the Father's kingdom is symbolic of the wedding feast of the Lamb and his church (see Rev. 19:7-8). In the beginning, Christians ate this holy meal every Sunday. (Sunday was the *Lord's Day*, because he arose from death on that day.)

This period of time closes with them singing a hymn. This may have been one of the appointed Psalms, or it could have been a completely new song of praise given to them by the Holy Spirit. Singing was given a new importance in the messianic community (i.e., the church). Christianity is uniquely a "singing religion." As they go out to the Mount of Olives, only two or three hours will pass until Jesus is betrayed and seized.

The humiliation, suffering, and death of the messiah was to be a great shock to the disciples, especially Peter. Peter seemed to be the most confident, and therefore had the farthest to fall. (Only Mark gives complete details.) yet we see him as Christ's servant on Pentecost. All would be changed by their contact with the risen Lord!

### **Questions for Discussion**

(Mark 13:9 - 14:31)

1. Show from the Scriptures that every nation had heard the gospel of Christ before Jerusalem was destroyed. Compare Col. 1:6, 23; 2 Tim. 4:17.
2. Show how Acts 4:19-20; 5:20-32; and 22:3-21 fulfill verse 11.
3. How could the "Awful Horror" possibly refer to the end of the world when those involved are to run away from Judea to the hills?



4. Are we to believe the destruction of Jerusalem was worse than dropping an atomic bomb on a city? Compare verse 19.

5. Why were there so many Jews in Jerusalem when the Roman army under Titus attacked? Why were there no Christians?

6. To whom is verse 23 being said?

7. What is the time-frame of verse 24?

8. Is this “Coming of the Son of Man” a prediction of literal events, or is this symbolic language?

9. How was the lesson of the fig tree fulfilled?

10. Why was it important to say that no one except the Father knew the day or the hour?

11. Has the Lord given each of us a specific mission to carry out? List ten separate areas of work for the Lord.

12. What was the one sin against which the Lord warned? Compare Matt. 25:1-13.

13. Please read John 12:2-8. When did this anointing take place? Isn't this a break in chronology? Discuss.

14. Read Luke 7:36-50 and point out the differences between the two anointings.
15. We know the identity of the woman by reading John's account. Who was she?
16. This was the act of a wealthy person. Was this waste justifiable? Discuss.
17. Jesus says something about good intentions versus good works in verse seven. What is it?
18. What possible motive or motives did Judas have in the betrayal? Suggest at least two.
19. Who were the two disciples whom Jesus sent into the city?
20. Why was the owner of the house so willing to allow his large upstairs room to be used by them?
21. Why did Jesus predict his own betrayal? Be specific in your reasons.
22. Did any of the disciples feel they were capable of betraying him?
23. The answer of verse 20 was not given to all of them. To whom? Why? Did Judas know?
24. If Jesus was betrayed in fulfillment of prophecy, why blame the one who did it?
25. Was the Passover meal finished before Jesus instituted his Supper? Discuss.

26. What is the symbolic meaning of the “broken bread”?

27. What symbolism do we find in the cup of wine? Which is important, the container or the contents?

28. Did the apostles have any idea what “covenant” (“testament”) was meant by Jesus (“*my blood which seals God’s covenant*”)?

29. What hymn was sung? Why? Read the hymn for an answer.

30. Why did Jesus predict the multiple denial of Peter?