

Divine Destruction

Mark 13:1-8

INTRODUCTION

- A. I hope you know that you are living in the last days of the planet earth.
1. According to so-called scholar & author John Major Jenkins, on December 21, 2012, “the December solstice sun will be found in the band of the Milky Way. We can call this an alignment between the galactic plane and the solstice meridian. This is an event that has slowly converged over a period of thousands of years, and is caused by the precession of the equinoxes. The place where the December solstice sun crosses the Milky Way is precisely the location of the ‘dark-rift’ in the Milky Way . . . the road to the underworld.”
 2. Jenkins has examined the predictions of the Mayan civilization & December 21, 2012, is an important date for mankind.
 3. Quite frankly, the predictions are difficult to understand & the “quacks” in the field have different interpretations of the data.
 - a. Some say that the earth will be swallowed up by a black hole next year; others claim that a planet just outside the earth’s orbit will collide with the earth; some say great tides, volcanic eruptions, & the like will leave few survivors on the earth.
 - b. Regardless of what interpretation you give the so-called “data,” it is clear that next year is a pivotal one in the history of mankind.
 4. I would **never** presume to know the mind of God, but I strongly suspect that the world will **not** end on December 21, 2012 just to prove the inadequacies of human predictions.
- B. Predictions of the end of the world are nothing new.
1. Christopher Columbus wrote a book called *The Book of Prophecies* & claimed that the world would end in 1656. By the way, the world didn’t end 353 years ago!
 2. The Heaven’s Gate cult claimed that the earth was about to be recycled & that the only chance of escaping the catastrophe was to commit suicide and catch a ride on the UFO following comet Hale-Bopp.
- C. I have no doubt that others will come in the future—if the world continues—and offer dates for the end of the world.
1. Many have used the words of this morning’s text to speak of the end of the world.
 - a. READ TEXT.
 - b. This morning’s text does not refer to the end of the world.
 - 1) Rather, Jesus speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - 2) That’s quite obvious, for the Lord says, “There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down” (v 2)—The stones of the temple were torn down when Titus, the future Roman emperor, destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.
 2. While the eight verses we study today do not speak of the end of the world, they do have great application for us.
 - a. The Lord’s prophecy, from our vantage point in history, is past, but we still need this lesson on “*Divine Destruction*.”
 - b. As we learn of “*Divine Destruction*,” we learn of DIVINE DEVASTATION, DIVINE DECEIVERS, & DIVINE DISASTERS.

DIVINE DEVASTATION, vv 1-2

- A. “And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.’”
- B. The context of this passage is that the Lord has been teaching in the temple.
1. Jesus has cleansed the temple, had his authority questioned, spoken about paying taxes, & commented on the poor widow who put in her two mites.
 2. The Lord then departs the temple.
 - a. It’s important to note that Jesus departs the temple before he speaks this judgment.
 - b. The temple with its worship stood as a testimony to the Christ, but those who worship there have

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- rejected God & his Christ. Therefore, Jesus pronounces judgment upon the temple and the city where it sits.
- c. It's also interesting to note that before the week is out God will leave the temple for the last time.
 - 1) God dwelt in the temple in a special way: "When the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD" (1 Ki 8:10-11).
 - 2) Yet, when Jesus was crucified, the veil covering the entrance to that Holy Place was destroyed: "Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (Mk 15:37-38).
 - 3) Jesus departs the temple for the last time on Wednesday; he dies on Friday. So, God in the flesh & God in the spirit depart the temple for good within about 48 hours of one another.
 - C. One of the disciples points out the wonderful stones & wonderful buildings of Herod's temple.
 1. Herod's temple was, indeed, something to behold.
 - a. The foundation of the temple mount encompassed approximately 1.5 million square feet; the United States Capitol, by contrast, covers 175,170 square feet.
 - b. Some of the stones of the temple weighed more than 100 tons; the largest stone is believed to have been 44.6 feet by 11 feet by 16.5 feet and weighed in the neighborhood of 600 tons.
 - b. The stones were made of white marble & gleamed in the sunlight; that gleam was helped by the heavy plates of gold that covered the front of the temple.
 - c. It took over 10,000 skilled workmen about 46 years to build the temple.
 2. As magnificent as the temple was, Jesus tells the disciples that not a single stone will be left upon another.
 - a. Today, the so-called Wailing Wall, part of the foundation of Herod's expansion, is all that's left of the temple.
 - b. The magnificent stones the disciple pointed out were completely & utterly destroyed.
 - D. Here's the point: Those who worshiped at the temple rejected God & God rejected them and sent judgment upon them.
 1. We know that judgment came upon Jerusalem for rejecting the Christ:
 - a. About Jerusalem, Jesus says, "The days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Lk 19:43-44).
 - b. Jerusalem was so well-fortified that Titus, after conquering the city, said, "It was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications."
 2. God has a long history of judging those who reject him:
 - a. He sent the Great Deluge upon the world when mankind rejected him in Noah's day.
 - b. About pagans, Paul writes, "Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done" (Rom 1:28). Because they rejected God, God rejected them.
 3. There is coming a day when God will bring great judgment upon those who have rejected him.
 - a. "The Lord Jesus [will be] revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess 1:7-8).
 - b. "It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him'" (Jude 14-15).
 - E. If we reject God, make no mistake—God will judge us. The Lord God will bring his full fury against those who stand against him. What side are you on?

DIVINE DECEIVERS, vv 5-6

- A. "See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray."
- B. Jesus says that many would arise & claim to be the Christ.
 1. Gamaliel counseled the Sanhedrin to be cautious with the apostles because the disciples of false christs had dispersed quickly: "Before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered" (Acts 5:36-37).

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2. Josephus also mentioned the rise of false christs.
 - a. “These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretense of Divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government; and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, as pretending that God would there show them the signals of liberty” (*Wars of the Jews*, II, 13.4).
 - b. “These impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XX, 8.6).
- C. Because some were not on their guard, they were deceived by these false christs; we must be on our guard that we are not deceived by error.
 1. False teachers have long been a problem in the church.
 - a. “There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pt 2:1).
 - b. “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn 4:1).
 2. We live in an age when many false teachers have gone out into the world.
 - a. You can find a preacher who will say just about anything you’d like him to say.
 - b. Even within our fellowship several have wandered away from the truth—whether we speak of changes in the women’s role or the instrument or the eldership, many brethren now advocate error.
 - c. The teaching of error should not surprise us in the least, for we were warned of it.
 - 1) “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith” (1 Tm 4:1).
 - 2) “The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Tm 4:3-4).
 3. Because error is such a real threat, we must arm ourselves with truth.
 - a. To the Ephesian elders Paul says, “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ***Therefore be alert***” (Acts 20:29-31).
 - b. “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve” (Rom 16:17-18).
- D. It was such an error that led to the rise of the Soviet Union.
 1. Gregory Rasputin, the “Mad Monk of Russia,” managed to get a stronghold on the royal family of his day.
 2. Czar Nicholas II & his wife Alexandra had a son who suffered from hemophilia.
 - a. The disease caused great pain in young prince Alexei & often threatened to take his life.
 - 1) The doctors of the early 20th century could do little to help the little prince & it was then that Rasputin would be brought in to perform a “miracle.”
 - 2) As incredible as it seems, remarkable healings seemed to occur whenever Rasputin was brought in.
 - b. The “Mad Monk” used such occasions to gain incredible influence for himself.
 - 1) Rasputin informed Nicholas & Alexandra that their son would die if they did not listen to his counsel.
 - 2) As a result, the Russian government was thrust into the reigns of a madman which led to the Russian Revolution & the rise of the Soviet Union.
 3. How might history be different had Nicholas & Alexandra not listened to Rasputin? Might it be that when you are in hell you wish that you had never listened to a false teacher?

DIVINE DISASTERS, vv 7-8

- A. “And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.”
- B. The disciples would hear of wars and kingdoms’ rising against kingdoms.
 1. The ten years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem were years of civil uproar like the world has not seen since.
 2. Rome was plunged into civil war & wars took place throughout the world.
- C. Earthquakes would occur in various places.
 1. No less than five tremendously great earthquakes rocked this region of the world between AD 45 & AD 70.

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2. Famine would be the natural outcome of great wars & earthquakes. Eusebius, an early church historian, says, “Nowhere was food to be seen.”
- D. The point is that through these disasters God provided his people signs that the temple’s destruction was at hand.
 1. Jesus informed the disciples that he was giving them signs as to the destruction of the temple: “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates” (vv 28-29).
 2. Early Christians were therefore able to flee & save their lives when these events began.
 - a. Eusebius writes, “The people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.”
 - b. The Christians living in Jerusalem were not overtaken by the destruction of Jerusalem, for they had been forewarned.
 3. There is no reason at all for us to be overtaken at the final Judgment, for we have been forewarned.
 - a. We may not have signs of the impending devastation—as did the Jews—but we know that day is coming!
 - 1) “You are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief” (1 Thess 5:4).
 - 2) “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Lk 12:40).
 - b. While we don’t know when he’s coming, we know that we need to be prepared to meet him at his coming!
- E. Robby Robins was an Air Force pilot during the first Iraq war.
 1. After his 300th mission, he was surprised to be given immediate permission to pull his crew together & fly his plane home.
 - a. They flew across the ocean to Massachusetts and then had a long drive to western Pennsylvania.
 - b. They drove all night, and when his buddies dropped him off at his driveway just after sun-sup, there was a big banner across the garage—“Welcome Home Dad!”
 2. But, how did they know?
 - a. No one had called, and the crew themselves hadn’t expected to leave so quickly.
 - b. When Robins walked into the house, the kids, about half dressed for school, screamed, “Daddy!”
 - 1) His wife came running down the hall—she looked terrific—hair fixed, make-up on, and a crisp yellow dress.
 - 2) Robins looked at her and asked “How did you know?”
 - 3) “I didn’t,” she answered through tears of joy. “Once we knew the war was over, we knew you’d be home one of these days. We knew you’d try to surprise us, so we were ready every day.”
- F. We may have absolutely no idea when the Lord is coming, but we know that he is.
 1. The Lord warned the Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem when to flee to the mountains—they listened and, as a result, not a single one perished.
 2. The Lord has likewise warned us when to flee to him for safety from God’s impending wrath.
 - a. “If the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Lk 12:39-40).
 - b. The Lord doesn’t tell us to get ready for his Second Coming, but he tells us to **be** ready!
 - 1) Like the family of Robby Robins, we must be ready every single day.
 - 2) Are you ready for the Lord’s return this very day?