**Daniel E. Hoffman – November 15, 2015 – Pent 25/prop 28**

**Mark 13:1-8**

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!”2Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

3When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately,4“Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?”

5Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray.6Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.7When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come.8For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birthpangs.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Gospel of Mark written in the early days of the formation of the Christian Church (c 70AD) has been called a passion narrative with a lengthy introduction. The pericope for this day is the transitional point between Jesus teaching ministry, and the Passion. Jesus and his disciples will leave the Temple for the last time, set up their “headquarters” on the Mount of Olives and wage war with the Religious/Political leaders/institutions within Israel, in order to reveal the true Glory of god, and to enable the full inbreaking of the Kingdom of God. Apart from a coherent connection Jesus teaching ministry and the Cross become hopelessly compartmentalized and distorted.

**VERSE BY VERSE:**

Vs 1 – The Temple – Center and sole site of Israel’s cultic life, the Temple was an impressive building set upon the peak of the Mountain Gleaming with its Bright stone & gold façade, its design lifted the eyes and heart heavenward. It was built to be impressive to worshippers, pilgrims, visitors and strangers regardless of one’s belief in God or living of the Covenant.

Here Jesus and his followers depart the Temple after an extensive time of teaching in the Temple area. What is interesting is that the unnamed disciple who takes note of the Temple’s grandeur does so as they depart after being there for a long time. The timing serves to set up Jesus response and move the hearer from an encounter with God in a religious site, to the encounter with God in a secular site where there is no grandeur, only suffering, death and destruction.

Vs2 No stone will be left upon another …. Jesus prediction of the Temple’s total destruction is an affront to the piety and pride of the Jews, and it points toward the Temple’s actual destruction in 70 AD when it was burned and then raised by Caesar’s army. This should not be read as any indication of the books dating either pre or post AD 70, but as a literary device intended to shock hearers in a way that sets them up for the passion and cross.

Vs 3 DESOLATION (of the Temple) Literally the abandonment of the Temple by worshippers because it has become profaned….Is the Temple emptied because it has been destroyed, burned, raised, or is it abandoned and falls into ruin because it fails to accomplish its purpose……For Christians Jesus death and resurrection make the Temple with its sacrifices unnecessary at best…AND YET Acts 2 speaks of the Apostles attending worship in the Temple, supplementing it with Table fellowship/Eucharist? This is an interesting tie to the Hebrews text!

Vs 3Mount of Olives – This is the best view of the Temple, picture post card images, nothing in the way to hide the Temple’s immensity

OPPOSITE the Temple – The Mount of Olives is not just opposite in that it stands on the opposite side of a small valley, but opposite in the sense that this is now Jesus Headquarters. He has set his path against that of the Temple leaders, and the religious system of the Law enshrined in those greats stones and impressive buildings. This is an image of Generals and their troops preparing for battle in the days before they take to the battlefield.

Peter, James and John – Jesus here speaks to his inner circle, but in vs 37 at the close of this discourse he makes it clear that this teaching to the inner circle is intended for all to hear, including the reader/hearer.

Vs 4 When will this happen – Jesus predictions have been clear as to What will happen, but the disciples seek the specificity of a timeline. Again they are like soldiers preparing for battle, knowing the enemy, and the task at hand, but WHEN is the kind of question that both stirs and calms the heart.

ALL THESE THINGS – the complex of MANY events which come together to form the passion narrative. It parallels the language of Daniel 12:6-7 When…… will all these things…………. come to an end.

The relationship between the Temple’s destruction and Jesus death and Resurrect ion are a key faith issue for the first century church.

THIS APOLYPTIC DISCOURSE is the only place where Jesus predicts the future, and connects that prediction to the historic events of the readers/hearers own time. Some of the events predicted by Jesus have already occurred(temple destroyed ), and some are in process (faithless disciples becoming faithful new Temple being built up in the churches etc) making this a FUTURE ORIENTED discourse, and yet how often do we focus on the destruction alone and get stuck in the present moment of chaos.

Vs 5 Beware/Watch out/Look – A punctuation (5x) used throughout this discourse. To SEE is used in conjunction to LISTEN, Seeing and Hearing come together in discernment of the truth, and of true and false claims re. salvation.

Lead astray – a technical term for the workings of false prophets, what they say is not nearly as harmful as where they lead people (away from God and the way of life/peace)

Vs 6 Many deceivers – Not merely that they claim to work/serve in Jesus name (recall They are healing in your name a we don’t know who they are 9:38-41) The deceit is that these claim to BE JESUS “I AM HE” ego aeimi thus causing disciples to abandon faith in Jesus and place it in another. This is the downside of the Ascension and promised second coming, and will not diminish until Jesus returns. Hence the beware is addressed to the church in every age.

 Implied here is the first answer to the disciples question when/what is the sign….NOT YET and the SIGNS you experience in history are not THE END< but merely the beginning of the birth pangs that will bring in the new age.

Vs 7 Wars and rumors of war – War/earthquakes/famines are standard signs that the end is drawing near, and they continue to occur throughout human history….Jesus points to these signs and heightening our anticipation of the immediacy of the new ages coming. This may be more a problem for the church of the 21st century than that of the first century…are we too comfortable with the structures of the institutional church apart from the passionate expectation of the coming new creation? As our modern day Temple of the denominational church crumbles around us, what do we do, how do we act, where do we look for guidance, perspective and a TRUTH worthy of giving our lives to?

Mark’s church is warned not to confuse their historical experiences with concrete signs of the coming kingdom but to live within that particular history with an eschatological hope…hence they experience tribulations and persecutions not total destruction. Can we hear the same warning as a call to hope filled faith\ today?

Vs 8 Labor pains - concrete realization that the anticipated birth is about to happen. What was promised and anticipated is about to become reality, with the transition being truly painful for the mother, and yet life giving in the long term. Again what is our perspective toward the labor pains we now experience fear or hope, dread or anticipation, doom & gloom, or light and peace….

Beginning of the labor pains – places the reader/hearer on the threshold in a “luminal place” between two worlds, two ways, two kingdoms with a foot, arm, ear and eye in EACH of the two realms….It can lead us to schizophrenia or provide a unique perspective that engenders faith in Christ.

**THEOLOGY:**

 Calamity and Christ are with us until the time line of History finds its fulfillment in God who created it. In the meantime we live in anticipation of Christ the Alpha and the Omega being all that he has promised to be for us and for the world. Living that expectant faith is not about knowing the when, but the WHO!

MARANATHA – VENI JESU – COME LORD JESUS