

Teaching Plan EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: May 12, 2019
Lesson Title: "Promises"
Lesson Passage: Mark 13:24-37

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In response to a disciple's praise of the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus predicts its destruction. He then speaks of the coming of the Son of man in the last times, but warns against the error of trying to predict the timing of these events.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Tell how the prediction of Jesus concerning the fate of the Temple was borne out in subsequent history. (2) Explain why Jesus warned his disciples to be on guard against deception.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

*Comment on the striking contrast between Jesus' words in Mark 12:43-44 regarding the sacrificial gift of a poor widow the disciple's exclamation concerning the glory of the temple in Mk. 13:1: Both Jesus and his disciple said, "Look!" The disciple said, "Look at this wonderful building! Look at the size of it!" But Jesus said, "Look at the wonderful sacrificial spirit of that poor woman!" The disciple was impressed by the quantity of material in the Temple. Jesus was impressed by the quality of the humble woman's sacrificial giving. *Then make this application:* Today, religious people, like the rest of our culture, tend to be like that disciple; they are impressed by the bigness, newness, and expensiveness of church buildings. An important implication of this lesson is that we should not become so preoccupied with magnificent temples and dramatic speculations about the "end times" that we overlook the significance of humble acts of devotion in the here and now.*

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Share these summary comments concerning the interpretation of the lesson passage:* In Mk. 13:24-31, Jesus is referring to the "end time." And in 13:32-37, he clearly tells his disciples that their response to this should be diligent and faithful living every day of their lives, rather than being obsessed with the scheduling of these events.

2. *Comment on Mk. 13:4-8:* (1) The comments of Jesus in verses 5-8 were prompted by the question of the disciples in v. 4. Their question was twofold: When would this destruction of the temple take place and what would be "the sign" preceding it? EXPLANATION: In their minds, the destruction of the temple would be an event of catastrophic proportions. This is why the response of Jesus is so cosmic in scope. (2) First, Jesus says, there will come a number of deceivers pretending to be the Messiah (v. 6). (3) Next would come (a) wars and rumors of wars, (b) earthquakes, and (c) famines. (4) These things are only preliminary signs, the "beginnings of sorrows" (v. 8). ("Sorrows" translates the word for birth pangs. Jesus probably

is referring to the pressures and persecutions that his people must face before the Second Coming.)

3. *Comment on the meaning of Mk. 13:32-33:* (1) Present-day religious pundits apparently “don’t get it” when they read the warn-ing of Jesus in vv. 32-33. They frequently cite the events described in Mk. 13:6-8 as evidence that “the end of the world is near” right now. (2) But this interpretation has two major flaws: *First*, these things are not just current events; they have been happening all through history. For example, while false messiahs like David Koresh of Branch Davidian fame have come on the scene in recent years, a messianic pretender named Bar-Cochba appeared as early as A. D. 132. And the original readers of Mark’s Gospel would, within their lifetimes, witness severe earthquakes at Laodicea in A. D. 61, the volcanic destruction of Pompeii in A. D. 62, and wars, such as the Jewish uprising in A. D. 66. *Second*, Jesus says specifically in Mk. 13:7, “these things are bound to happen” (“must needs be” in KJV), “but the end is not yet.” In other words, the disciples should not assume that such events would signal the immediate end of the world. (3) The assertion of Jesus, “you do not know,” which appears in both v. 33 and v. 35, should be taken at face value.

4. *Ask your class members*, “If you knew the Second Coming would take place in one week, what would you do between now and then?” *Pause for responses. Then refer to the answer one Christian gave when asked that question:* “I would do just what I’ve been doing all along; I’d try to live faithfully each day of my life.” *Point out that Jesus seems to be advocating that attitude in Mk. 13:33-37. Share these thoughts:* (1) Rather than being preoccupied with attempts to calendarize the Second Coming, they should “take heed” and “stay awake” (v. 33). “Take heed” means that they should “watch out,” being careful not to be duped by false teachers (*recall Mk. 13:5*). APPLICATION: Christians who do not take the Bible seriously enough to study it carefully are likely targets for teachers of strange doctrines, for they won’t know false teachings when they see them. “Watch” means, literally, “don’t fall asleep.” Christians should live in a constant state of preparedness.

CLOSING THE LESSON

A final comment: Obsessive concentration on “*last things*,” can lead us to forget *first things*, such as the “greatest commandments” given in Mk. 12:29-31, “Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

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