A Look at the End

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.!

A place that everybody wants to get to and talk about, and yet a place where many get overwhelmed or discouraged, or for some, even a little argumentative.
We approach the Gospel of Mark where it's going to talk about the last days, the end times. To this point, Mark has been all about understanding the life of Jesus, His words, His miracles.
In chapter 14, it's going to pick back up with His arrest and His trials. Chapter 15, His crucifixion. Chapter 16, His resurrection.
But tucked in between there is chapter 13. This well-known part of the Gospels where He speaks of His future return.
[1:44] It's here in Mark 13, found in Matthew 24, 25 as well. It's here that Jesus gives His longest recorded answer to a question in the New Testament.

Now, there is much interest in our day. I suspect in every day, throughout the years and centuries even.
But much interest in our day about the future return of Christ. It's called the doctrine of eschatology. It's the study of the last things. The study of the last days. For some, eschatology or prophecy or the end times is a hobby horse that people love to bring up for the purpose of debate or even argument. I'll just tell you, that's not me. If you are one who loves to argue and debate these things, have at it, all right?
[3:01] That's not the purpose, ultimately, of why this is here. For others, it's hard to understand.

And so, they don't really want to debate it because they don't really understand it. And it just is kind of unnerving to them. Makes them kind of nervous, kind of anxious. And not only the events, the return of the Lord and what's judgment going to look like and heaven and hell and the eternal state. It's just kind of unnerving for some because they don't really understand it. Or maybe you've heard just enough preaching or read just enough theology books that you know that there's a lot of discussion and disagreement.
And it just kind of makes you unsettled to know that people don't agree on all the details of this. And so, it just kind of makes you uncomfortable. And for others, they just leave this alone altogether.
For some Christians, they're happy to talk about creation and origins. They're happy to talk about the incarnation of Christ. They're happy to talk about salvation.
[4:15] They're happy to talk about the Christian life and spiritual disciplines in the Christian life. But just have no interest and no knowledge at all about how all this ends.

But I do want you to understand that Christ did not give us His word on the end times for us to ignore it.
And this is here for our good. In fact, Lord willing, my plan in August when we resume our Sunday evening services, my plan is for us to study through 1 Thessalonians on Sunday night starting in August.
And I was able to spend 50 or 60 hours this past week actually in 1 Thessalonians just working ahead. And there are two verses in 1 Thessalonians that are very applicable for where we are in Mark 13.
If you know 1 Thessalonians a little bit, you'll know that it's a place where Paul and Silas and Timothy had gone to do ministry.
[5:39] They were run out of town. They established a church, spent a little bit of time there, taught them, got the church established. They were run out of town. Paul was concerned about how well they were doing and if they were okay.

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So he sent Timothy to go check on them. Timothy comes back, meets up with Paul in Corinth, and gives Paul an update on how this church in Thessalonica is doing.
Paul then writes the letter we know as 1 Thessalonians to them. And in chapter 4, he deals with the coming of the Lord.
Familiar words where he says things like in verse 15, we who are alive, we are left until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with the cry and command of the voice of an archangel and the sound of the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. And then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
[6:49] So we will always be with the Lord. In these words that are dealing with eschatology, the last verse of chapter 4, verse 18, says, Therefore, encourage one another with these words.

In the Bible, the teaching of eschatology is not about debate and argumentation. It's about comfort. So it would really be wrong for us to say, let's just skip eschatology.
Let's just stay with the church. Let's stay with prayer. Let's stay with Bible study. Let's stay with evangelism. But let's leave eschatology alone. It's too weird. It's too uncomfortable.
It's too controversial. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul says, encourage one another with these words. In chapter 5 in 1 Thessalonians, it deals with the day of the Lord.
Talks about labor pains that will come upon a pregnant woman. It says that the coming of the Lord will be like a thief. And then it says in verse 11, therefore, encourage one another and build one another up.
[8:12] So Paul in 1 Thessalonians, when he deals with eschatology, it's not about argumentation or debate or picking sides.

It ultimately, in his mind, is about encouraging each other, comforting each other. Incidentally, Paul did not spend very long in Thessalonica.
He was just there for a short season. And when he writes them the letter, he is building upon what he had already taught them, which means Paul, having been in this church for just a short time, brought to their attention the doctrine of eschatology.
That's not something that you wait for years and years and years and years later. He thought it was something the church understand from the very beginning. So when you come back to Mark 13, I do want you to understand my heart in these next few weeks that will be in Mark 13 is what Paul's heart was in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, and that is that these words would encourage us and comfort us.
Now, we do have to acknowledge the obvious here. There are differences of how people interpret and understand what the Bible says about the end times.
[9:48] When most people think about the end times, their mind goes to the book of Revelation. And there are different ways that people interpret the book of Revelation. There are some terms that are the primary ways that people see it.

There's the preterist view. There is what's called the futurist. That's believing that the events of Revelation are going to be real. They're in the future.
There is what's known as the idealist view, and that sees the events of Revelation as a symbolic, ongoing war between good and evil, or a historistic view that says that these are things that happen throughout the church history age.
So there are different ways people view the book of Revelation. Revelation. I mentioned the preterist view, which is one that feels that the events dealing with the prophecies here in Mark 13 and other places are largely fulfilled in 70 A.D., that time when the temple was destroyed, when 1.1 million Jews were killed and 100,000 Jews were taken captive.
In addition to those views and different ways you interpret the book of Revelation, there's also some differences in how we would view the millennial kingdom.
[11:24] And the primary categories that these fall into would be amillennial, postmillennial, or premillennial.

Amillennial would take Mark 13 as all of it being completed except for the second coming. The kingdom is symbolic and is a spiritual reality.
Postmillennial view sees Jesus returning to the earth after things have improved so much that it ushers in this golden age, and so the millennial kingdom is now.

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The premillennial view sees Jesus establishing a true reign on this earth, literally fulfilling the prophecies and promises made to Israel.
And depending on where you fall on that will depend on how you view Mark 13. When you look at Mark 13, it seems to break pretty clearly to me in verses 1 and 2 of things he's talking about that will soon take place from his day when he speaks of the stones coming down and the temple being destroyed.
[12:45] That does happen in 70 A.D. And then he begins to teach them in verses 3 to 13 about what is to come. And then a bit of a cue for us here in verse 14 of the change, a clue that something different happens from verse 13 to verse 14.

But when you see the abomination of desolation taking place, and then comes a second different set of instructions.
And then from there, he talks about in verse 24, the second coming, and then he talks about lessons to learn from that and how to make sure we are prepared for his return.
I want to establish a couple of cautions because we're going to be in Mark 13 for a few weeks here. Number one, there are incredibly godly and trusted theologians and people who hold to these different views.
This is not a matter of one view is orthodox and the others are strange or the others are false teaching or heretical. I could tell you names of people in church history that are highly regarded and names of people in our current day that are highly respected that fall into all three of those camps.
[14:25] I personally have benefited greatly from teachers and theologians who are all millennial and post-millennial and pre-millennial.

I also want to say that I recognize that it would be impossible in a church our size for everybody here to hold to the same view. And that's okay.
If you are one who holds to a different view and you can't sleep at night knowing someone disagrees with you, just know that I can.
All right? I'm not interested in debate. I'm not interested in arguments. It is not hard for me to go to sleep at night knowing someone else sees something differently.
There are people in our church, I am quite certain, who would fall into all of these different camps. That's okay. I'm going to walk you through what I believe is best.
[15:35] I'm going to walk you through the view that I think is the most biblical. I'm going to try to show you why that's the case and why I think that fits the entirety of Scripture. But for those who may hold a different view, it's all right.

I also want you to understand that all these different views, all millennial, premillennial, postmillennial, all these different views agree that Jesus is the only way to heaven, that salvation is found in no other name but Jesus.
all agree that Christ is literally returning for us and that we will be with Him for all eternity.
And at the end of it all, that is the most important thing. How do you get to heaven? Who are you with in heaven?
That's true. Absolutely true. And what will we do in heaven? These are the most important questions.
[16:47] How do you get there? Through Jesus alone. Saved by grace through faith. Who is there with us? It's the presence of the Lord Himself. That is what makes heaven, heaven.

And what do we do in heaven? We glorify the Lord. There are things the Bible tells us about our work and activity in heaven, but ultimately, it's about God's people redeemed by His grace together with the Lord for all time, without sin, without sorrow, without shame, without death, worshiping and glorifying the Lord.
So, if there is, even among us in the church, some difference of opinion of the timing of how those things work out, it's not that those things are insignificant.
I think they are quite significant, but it's certainly not a test of our fellowship or our unity. Nor should it be a test of our fellowship or unity with people outside of our church.
the things that we agree on are glorious. But our salvation is in Jesus alone.
[18:05] But our hope is in Christ. And that we will be with Him for all eternity because of His work on the cross and His resurrection.

And we have so much, even among brothers of mine, fellow pastors of mine, that we may disagree on where we would fall in these things.

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We have so much we agree on that partnering together in ministry is not a problem and worshiping together is a glorious thing because either way, all of our attention is on Christ.
So, I want to make sure we're clear on that. because I don't want you to think that people who would disagree with what I'm teaching you, that they are lazy or that they are unbiblical or that they don't love Jesus as much as I do or they don't know the Bible.
None of that at all. There are good people that disagree on that and it's not because they don't take the Bible seriously. Now, our differences matter and I think it's worth laboring to try to be as precise and accurate and correct as we can.
[19:27] One reason is because in the Bible itself, as I've already read for you, Paul says, this is for your encouragement. So, the next few weeks in Mark 13 is not about debate and argumentation, I hope.

It's about encouraging the people of God. So, with that in mind, let's look at Mark 13. I'm going to give you a few words to write down the next several weeks.
Right first, we'll start with the word stones. These are the things that are helping you, it'll help you remember the flow of the Olivet Discourse. Stones.
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.
[20:42] The temple was magnificent. The temple had been built by Solomon in 949 B.C., about a thousand years before Jesus.

The Babylonians come in 586 and destroy it. Gets rebuilt when they return from exile.
The people are discouraged because it doesn't look anything like it used to. And then Herod begins this project of redoing the temple, refurnishing it.
he gets in this very, very lengthy building project with it. Herod's been making improvements by the time Mark 13 is written and they're going to continue for about another 35 years.
In fact, the work is going to finish just a couple of years before it all gets destroyed in 70 A.D. The stones were overlaid with gold and it was said that you couldn't even look directly at the temple when the sun was shining on it because it would be so bright reflecting off of it.
[22:07] One of the disciples says, teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings. Jesus says, you see these stones?

You see these buildings? They're all coming down. And here Jesus gives a prophecy of a coming judgment, of a coming destruction.
These massive stones that he says will all come down. If you get to visit Jerusalem, you'll still see these stones lying around.
They did come down. Judgment did fall. Jesus is repeating this. He has said this a few times.
He said it in Luke on the triumphal entry. He has said it earlier in this day. We're just a couple of days out before his crucifixion in Matthew 23.
[23:26] And now he says it again. These stones, this temple, this place, it's coming down.

Judgment will fall. after the word stones, I want you to write second the word searching. Because after they hear this, the disciples are searching for answers.
Verse three, and as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, just stop for a minute here. So, you're at the temple area, you travel east, you go through the Kidron Valley, and then you settle over on the Mount of Olives.
We've got about a hundred or so from our church who have gone with us on trips to Israel to see this. And if you can picture in your mind that temple complex, go to the east, under the Kidron Valley, goes this way, then up on the side there is the Mount of Olives.
You're looking back over across at the temple area. Peter and James and John Andrew asked him privately, tell us when will these things be?
[24:45] And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? These two sets of brothers pull Jesus aside and ask very fair questions.

Jesus has just said these stones are coming down, these buildings are coming down, judgment is going to fall. And so Peter and James, John and Andrew, pull him aside privately and say, please tell us, when are these things going to be?

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When is all of this going to be accomplished? And Jesus begins what's known as the Olivet Discourse, this teaching from the Mount of Olives?
When you put the Gospels together, these disciples are really asking a few questions. When is the temple going to be destroyed? What are the signs of your coming?
And what are the signs of the end of the age? Now, what you need to understand is that the apostles weren't thinking of Jesus going away for a long time and then returning.
[26:12] In their mind, this was going to happen very quickly. They knew that the Messiah had been prophesied, here is the Messiah with them, and in their mind, whatever is about to happen to bring in this golden age of the Messiah is going to take place very quickly.

In fact, even after the resurrection, right before the ascension of Jesus, they're still asking these same questions.
Most of us are familiar with Acts 1-8 that says you'll receive power, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria under the end of the earth.
Most of us are familiar with Acts 1-8. But it's very interesting what comes right before that. This is right before the ascension, right before this great command and encouragement of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.
In Acts 1 verse 6, it says, when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?
[27:40] That's quite telling. After the cross, after the resurrection, resurrection, the apostles did not wonder, was there a literal future for Israel?

They just wondered on the timing. And what's further interesting is when they say to Jesus, is it now that you're going to restore the kingdom of Israel?
Is it now that you're going to complete your work with Israel? Jesus does not say, where'd you get that? Jesus did not say, why would I restore the kingdom to Israel?
Jesus does not say, I don't know where you've come up with that theology. He doesn't correct them at all. He doesn't say that their thinking is wrong, their theology is wrong, their doctrine is wrong, his answer is quite telling.
In verse seven, he said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.
[29:08] God's will I do believe in a literal future for Israel and so did the apostles.

And knowing the apostles believed that, Jesus doesn't correct their thinking at all. other than to tell them, it's not up to you to know when.
He doesn't correct what. He just tells them, you don't need to worry about knowing the details of when.
and to that conversation, Jesus says, here's what you do need to know. That the Holy Spirit will come upon you to take the gospel to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth.
We also know this was on their mind because in Luke 19 11, it says, they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.
[30:31] So their question, their searching question is, when is the temple coming down? When are you returning? And when are you restoring the kingdom to Israel?

Jesus answered that question when he put it all together. is don't worry about when that's fixed by the will of your father.
Your work is to take the gospel to the nations. So just a word of application here.
For those who love the study of eschatology and prophecy, see, that's not a bad thing. You're studying what God gave us. I affirm you in that.
But do let me give you a caution. Make sure your love for eschatology is balanced by your commitment to evangelism.
[31:39] I think that's a biblical way to view it. It's not that eschatology is irrelevant. We're about to spend a number of weeks on it because Mark 13 does.

But when the apostles ask Jesus about eschatology, he doesn't correct their thinking. He just gives them the caution.
And the caution is you don't have to know when everything's going to happen, but what you must be consumed with is taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

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And part of the danger for those who tend to love prophecy and eschatology is they can tend to love, debate, and be silent on evangelism.
Which would be saying to people, I'm right of how this is going to end, I just won't tell you how you can get there. And that's the caution.
[32:58] let's balance our love of doctrine with a commitment to evangelism.

The stones tell us that judgment is coming. Searching tells us they're asking questions about when. And now we get into the heart of the matter.
Here's what you really want to know. It's your third word, signs. This is what people want to know. Verse five, Jesus began to say to them, see that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name saying I am he and they will lead many astray.
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.
[34:08] There will be earthquakes in various places. There will be famines. These are but the beginning of birth pains. things. And he's going to through verse 13 spell out a number of signs that are going to take place to let you know when these things happen.

He gives us this metaphor in verse eight of birth pains. And if you're familiar with birth pains of any kind, your own or your wife's, you know that these increase in intensity and frequency the closer you get to the end.
I want to caution you to not try to take the role of a prophet and every time there's an earthquake stand up and say that's Mark 13's earthquake.
you're not a prophet neither am I. I don't know when and neither do you. But these signs are metaphors of birth pains meaning that as you get closer and closer and closer they're just like your birth contractions they start and they're not I don't want to say they're mild I don't want to offend half my congregation here but they're not as bad as they're going to be they're going to get more intense and if you time them you've got some space between one contraction and the next and the frequency is going to get closer together as the intensity gets higher and higher that's the metaphor so stay away from people who will try to tell you by what's on the headlines that they can tell you when
Jesus is coming back in fact I will tell you people who tell you they know when he's coming back just did you a favor you should never again listen to them ever you're going to see these signs happening and as they happen they're going to get more intense and more frequent and eventually the end will come but don't think that you know or need to know exactly when because the bible's already spoken to that you don't know the day and the hour that's what Jesus said he told them again in Acts 1 it's not for you to know the times and seasons you don't need to see the calendar of God what you need to know is his plan and his purpose what is going to happen why is it going to happen and what are you supposed to do that's what the church needs to know when it's going to happen is not for you to know
[37:56] Deuteronomy 29 29 the secret things belong to the Lord the things revealed are for us there are things that we know and we got to study and do the hard work to understand them and to rightly interpret them because they are for us the secret things like when is not for us to know but I will say as you probably heard me before and this is where I really want you to think about this as we can introduce Mark 13 today I'm asked often as I assume most pastors are do you think Jesus coming in our lifetime I have a great answer for that I don't know I don't know and let me just caution you let me caution you if you think you know in

America things aren't as good for Christians as they were 20 years ago I mean how much worse can this get he has to be coming back well maybe just a little bit of knowledge of history would be helpful for us here right I mean think about the people in church history including our world today who don't lose their jobs they lose their heads for the sake of the gospel so let's not think that somebody who hurts your feelings on Facebook must mean the world is coming to an end because oh my goodness look how terrible life has gotten for me little bit of history would do us good could he come in our lifetime sure and that would be great
I'm 50 I'll be 51 in two months and he could come in my lifetime but I'll tell you what I do know I'm not that far away from meeting him either way I may get a few more years maybe I get 30 more years maybe I get 40 years maybe I get to see 90 that's not that far away and for many of you in the congregation 90 is even closer so whether he's returning in your lifetime or not brothers and sisters these are your last days and we need to think like that because if I could tell you and I can't but if

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I could tell you that I know for sure I know for sure God is not coming back in your lifetime and don't listen to anyone who tells you that run from them but if I could for sure tell you that and your response was oh thank goodness I don't have to worry about these things yet who promised you tomorrow why do you think you're guaranteed to wake up tomorrow when your alarm goes off we're living in our last days all of us and maybe it's because the Lord returns for his church or maybe it's because you take your last breath but either way you need to be ready to meet the
Lord you need to be ready as we walk through chapter 13 starting with next Sunday we're going to get into the specific signs we're going to get into the specific events of the tribulation we're going to get into what happens in the tribulation we're going to get to what is the turning point in the tribulation we're going to get to what happens with the church as relates to the tribulation we're going to get to what happens when Christ returns in his second coming but I want you to understand that you could understand Mark 13 really well and yet not be prepared to meet the Lord face to face this is not an exercise simply in doctrine this is our walk through the gospel for the purpose of knowing doctrine so that we would be ready to meet the
[43:35] Lord and there is a difference you can memorize the 66 books of the Bible and who wrote them and who they wrote them to and when they wrote them and how many chapters in every book if you're in our men's institute by the way guys you will know all those things or you will do poorly because you will take tests for two years where you've got to know the books of the Bible who wrote them when they wrote them how many chapters in the books you're going to have to know that but you can know that and not be ready to meet the Lord you can memorize books of the Bible and not be ready to meet the Lord so when Paul said in first Thessalonians comfort and encourage each other with these words understand that the idea of you going to be with the

Lord at death or the Lord coming for his bride either way when you are absent from the body present with the Lord there's only comfort if you're one of his there is no comfort outside of conversion so for the next number of weeks Lord willing we're going to walk verse by verse we'll pick up next week what the specific signs are in verse seven and we're going to get in the nitty gritty of eschatology as the Lord has revealed it to us by his own words in Mark 13 but the most important question is not when because that's not for us to know the most important question is are you ready to meet him have you confessed your sin and put your faith in the
Lord Jesus Christ do you believe that Jesus is the son of God who lived a perfect life who was crucified on the cross died in our place laid into the tomb and brought to life on the third day do you believe that Jesus is the savior for all who believe in his name and there is no other name under heaven whereby men must be saved do you believe that Christ in grace and mercy has paid for your sin and that you have placed your faith in Christ and Christ alone so that no matter what charges may come against you you can say there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus that's my question to you this morning are you ready these next four five six Sundays I'm going to do my best to teach you exactly what Jesus taught his disciples about the end times and if you're here every Sunday for the next five or six Sundays you're going to have a better understanding of eschatology then than you do today and you're going to be able to move around the scriptures at a better capacity to explain and defend and understand it than you do today but none of that will help you if you're not ready Jesus is the answer Jesus is the savior all mill pre mill post mill preterist futurist idealist historic dispensational pre mill mill I give you whatever terms and nuance you want here's what we can all agree on we're all sinners judgment is coming and
Jesus is the answer make sure you're ready to meet the Lord Lord we do thank you for your word and I pray that it would be helpful for us instructive for us humbling for us I do pray in the weeks to come that we would learn you've called us to study to show ourselves approved you've told us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ but I pray that our knowledge would lead to worship and devotion and obedience and that it would make us more ready to be with you we ask it in Jesus name amen I love you church family pray for us for VBS this week pray for our children and our families God bless you you're dismissed they...

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