**The Gospel of Mark: A Disciple’s Mirror**

***Reflections on Following Jesus --***From A Handbook on Cross-Bearing

***Are these the “Last Days”? . . .***Or, Read the signs, not between the lines. **Mark 13:1-37**

**What’s (happening in) the story?** Jesus charts the age.

Jesus answers the disciples’ questions about the coming destruction of Jerusalem, and then speaks of His return in glory. Between those events, there will be persecution and gospel-preaching, but the signs of His coming will be quite clear.

**What’s the challenge in the story?** How do we stay alert for Jesus?

Jesus knows we are easily fearful, distracted and misled, so He peppers his message with warnings: “Be alert,” “Don’t be deceived,” and “Not yet.” Our curiosity gets the better of us and we want to go beyond His instructions. Jesus’ words draw upon Daniel 9-12, and parallel past prophecies with those still to be fulfilled.

**What are the key elements in the story?**

***The Question: How will the prophesied destruction happen?*** vv. 1-4

The disciples want to know when their Temple will be destroyed, and the signs that would accompany that. Jesus’ answer is much more layered.

* ***Answer, Part One: “Here’s what you can expect day to day.”*** vv. 5-13

Don’t be fooled! False Christ cults, wars, saber rattling, earthquakes, and famines are expected, and are NOT signs of the end. Luke 21:9-19

* ***Answer, Part Two: “But one day, things will change drastically.”***vv. 14-23

First, an unmistakable evil world figure will appear. Get out of his way. Next will come an unmistakable period of world-wide tribulation. Don’t be surprised, or deceived by even more false Christs. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

* ***Answer, Part Three: “Then, and only then, I will return!”*** vv. 24-27

Unmistakable cosmic signs will signal the return of Jesus in all His glory to gather His people to Himself. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-53

* ***Answer, Part Four: “Read the signs and stay ready!”*** vv. 28-37

When things finally begin to unwind, the generation that sees it begin will see it end. The Temple was destroyed (A. D. 70) within that generation, and the return of the Lord will happen in the generation of the cosmic signs. Jesus is NOT predicting secrecy, but suddenness, so the danger is not surprise, but slothfulness.

All will see. Few will be prepared. Are you prepared? 2 Thess. 1:5-12; Rev. 1:4-7

**What’s the big idea (main point) of the story?**

Jesus will return in glory in the last of the last days, but in the meantime, He wants us fearlessly and without distraction to take the Gospel to all nations.

***So let’s take a look at ourselves in Mark’s mirror. . .***

1. Are you stable in your faith or easily troubled? John 14:1-6

2. Are you ready for Jesus’ return? Are you living for Him? 1 John 3:1-3

3. Are you fully satisfied with Jesus’ explanation? Daniel 12:8-13

4. Are you ready to be persecuted for the Gospel? John 15:18-25