

Heart of a Servant The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 13

The University of Virginia Library has published wonderful information on the history of music in America. Concerning the background of what we call today "negro spirituals" they write, "From 1788, when the First African Church in Savannah, Georgia, became the earliest independent African-American congregation in the country, worship services incorporated the spirituals. In addition to singing traditional Protestant hymns, African-American churches embraced this other form of song, described by slaves as "spiritual himes" to distinguish them from the Biblical songs of the European tradition."

The spirituals are powerful songs that have inspired many for centuries. One of the most well-known spirituals is "Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen." The lyrics are sung one verse at a time followed by an affirming "Oh yes, Lord" echo and a chorus interspersed throughout. Here are most of the lyrics.

Select verses:

Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down Sometimes I'm almost to the ground Now you may think that I don't know But I've had my troubles here below One day when I was walkin' along The sky opened up and love come down...

Chorus:

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen Nobody knows but Jesus Nobody knows the trouble I've seen Glory hallelujah!

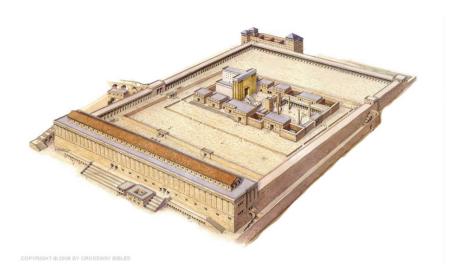
There is something to be said when a person is going through times of great trouble and yet they remain confident that Jesus sees all, knows all, and can sing from their heart "Glory hallelujah!" in response. In Mark 13 Jesus prophesies of darker times than the wicked days of slavery. The disciples are given many details about the signs that would accompany the end times before His second coming including what He calls the great tribulation. And though these days will be filled with universal trouble, there will still be those who praise "Glory hallelujah!" even though it will cost them their lives.

"Satan so hates the genuine praise of Christ but his fiery darts of discouragement are not effective against us when we respond in praise."

~ William Thrasher

Read Mark 13:1-2

It seems a strange place to begin our chapter, yet the glory that bursts from the disciples' pride over the temple's breathtaking construction became the launching pad for Jesus' prophetic predictions of the near and distant future. Nearly everyone would have agreed in Jesus' day that the temple was beyond impressive with its marble pillars, gold overlays, and limestone blocks that weighed more than 160 tons each. (There are many reproductions you can find on the web but here is a sample diagram of what Herod's temple looked like to further illustrate.)



- 1. There may be some of us that attend presently, or did in the past, a very ornamental or architecturally beautiful church. It may be that you have visited a place of worship where your eyes were dazzled by luminous stained glass windows, intricate carvings with details etched in polished woodwork, or the stone and ironworks were nearly museum-like in artistry. Our God deserves all the best that can possibly be offered to Him, but neither the created work nor its artist are ever to block, distract, or detract from the worship of God.
 - a. Read Deuteronomy 27:4-6. As the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan heading into the promised land, they were to take large stones and do three things to them. List them here.
 - b. The stones were whitewashed in order to more clearly display the words that God wanted on them. No tool was to be used by any carver on the Lord's altar of worship. Why do you think these two things were important to the Lord?

2. Answer	these simple questions without feeling the need to expound.
	Have you ever gone to listen to a special Christian musician perform, or a Christian band in concert, or some type of well-known worship leader?
b.	Name two or three pastors, Bible teachers, or women that you enjoy listening to the most when they teach or share about the Lord.
c.	Name two or three of your favorite Christian authors.
d.	Write out Isaiah 42:8.
	Whether a magnificent structure, an angelic singing voice, an expert in Greek and Hebrew, or an incredible Bible teacher, the Lord wants our hearts to worship Him, not the work of other men's hands, nor their gifts/talents He has given them. What might be a warning sign that a person is more enamored and impressed with a person or place rather than the Lord?

"Whatsoever we have over-loved, idolized, and leaned upon, God has from time to time broken it, and made us to see the vanity of it..." ~ John Flavel

Read Mark 13:3-13

3. Mark's gospel is the only one that specifies the four disciples that asked Jesus three questions (see Matt. 24:25-30): When would the temple be destroyed? What would be the sign of His coming? and What would be the signs of the end of the age? They thought that these events would all occur at the same time, so Jesus explains the course of events more specifically. He addresses Hebrew issues that concerned Israel, their Messiah, and His theocracy. In Matthew's gospel, you can see Jesus refer to the Christian church and its responsibility, but He concludes with signs that include all the nations around the world.

Nevertheless, it is easy to see that our Savior's main concerns were that His people would not be deceived, that they would not be overwhelmed with worry and anxiety, and that they would be continually watching for His return and not for outward signs and wonders (Philippians 3:20-21).

a. Look at Mark 13, verses 5-6 and 21-23. Jesus says that many believers will be repeatedly deceived by those who claim to be Himself or those who speak for or represent Him. Prayerfully think and pray about this: how can a believer **prevent** being deceived by someone who claims to be Jesus or His representative (vs.6)?

b. If a friend asked you what your mother or husband or close friend was like, you would be able to give them a description of several different qualities you know by your relationship with them. In that same way, describe what Jesus is like based on your own relationship with Him.

c.	One sure way to prevent this kind of deception is by having an intimate knowledge of the Lord.
	The closer you are to Him, the more familiar you are with His character and His Word, and the
	more you learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, the easier it will be to identify a "counterfeit"
	or misrepresentative. In the end times those with false fronts will use several means to try and
	prove that they represent the Lord: they rise in power or influence and have visible "signs and
	wonders" that seem to authenticate them. Look up Revelation 13:13-14. Write what happens
	in those two verses in your own words.

- 4. We see that the deception will be great because the signs and wonders done with Satanic power will be great.
 - a. Write out the words of John 12:37 here.
 - b. Look up Acts 2:43 and 5:12, Romans 15:19, and Hebrews 2:4. What did Jesus do in the past, as well as today by the Holy Spirit, through believers?
 - c. Jesus did miraculous signs and wonders which moved some to believe in Him. The apostles in the past and believers today are given gifts by the Holy Spirit which demonstrate miraculous power. Yet, Satan has been and always will be a counterfeiter. Paul knew this and was afraid for the Corinthians because of their possibly receiving people that brought in another Jesus, a different spirit (or attitude), or another gospel. Read 2 Corinthians 11:1-4 and 12-15. How would you possibly know if a person brought you a different Jesus, a different attitude or spirit, or a different gospel?

5. Proverbs 14:15 says "The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps." In Micah's day (Micah 2:11), people with this false spirit often lied and assured people of false comfort an encouraged them toward partying with wine and alcohol.	ıd
a. Read Isaiah 30:9-11. How are the people in this passage setting themselves up for deception even though they did not want to get rid of prophecy of the prophets?	n
b. We have learned how religious traditions can be outside the bounds of the Word of God. We've also learned that a person (as the scribes) can know the word of God in their head, yet have no relationship with Christ in their heart. An outward experience, even an incredible miracle or sign done in the name of Jesus, must NEVER have more influence over us than the Word of God. Write down a time when the Word of God powerfully worked in your life or has made a lasting impact upon you.	ıs

Additional Study References: Since this is primarily a devotional study of Mark, we will not be going into all of the different prophecies concerning the end times, the rapture, and the Great Tribulation. Here are some cross-references for those of you who would like to dig deeper into these subjects: Daniel 9:24-27 and 12:1-11; Isaiah 13:6-13; Joel 2:1-11, 31-32, 3:14-15; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10.

- 6. In Mark 13:7-13, Jesus speaks of His people being beaten in unimaginable places, arrested for inconceivable reasons, betrayed by the most unlikely people, and hated for irrational reasons. They've also heard of natural disasters and global upheaval in war, yet Jesus says "do not be troubled" and "do not worry" (vs.7, 11). Even though just reading this may stir exactly that in your heart!
 - a. Fill in the blanks from Mark 13 to discover why Jesus could say this.

"But	you hear" Vs. 7	
"But	out" Vs. 9	
"But	they arrestand deliv	ver you up" Vs. 11
"So	you see" Vs. 14	
"But take heed;	I have told you	things beforehand." Vs. 23

- b. In addition to these, write down what Jesus says in each of these verses.
 - 1) John 13:19
 - 2) John 16:1

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3) Matthew 24:25

pho abo	2 Peter 3:17, Peter calls the believers who loved the Lord and knew the scriptures about proetic events beforehand "steadfast." Looking over Mark 13:23 and Jesus' words in part "b" ove, besides being steadfast, what else should knowing these troubling events before they cur produce in us?
	ter prophetic words from Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4, what did he say we should do with the ords of God given to us beforehand from verse 18?
_	ner John 14:1, 18, 27 and 29. Out of Jesus' words, write out a prayer of heartfelt thankfulness or His promises, assurance, and love.
	no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. re called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ~ John 15:15 NIV

Read Mark 13:14-27

- 8. Fear of the unknown is a very real struggle for many and tends to bring anxiety, worry, and depression as if they were inseparable companions. They can come knocking on the door of your heart or whispering on the fringes of your attention constantly. Jesus begins to describe in great detail "tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation," knowledge of the events beforehand, and understanding about people in general. This should cement belief in Who Jesus is and the validity of His word for those walking through the end times. It should bring comfort to know, just as our introduction stated, that the Lord knows our troubles and sorrows and is intimately acquainted with all of man's ways. Yet, we read the contrary actually occurs during the tribulation; people will get angry at God for the disasters and shake their fist at heaven due to the consequences of their own sin.
 - a. There seems to be two distinct responses in our hearts when we experience great pain and adversity: either we get closer to the Lord or further away from Him. Suffering and trials often lead a person to ask the "why?" questions in a search for understanding. What two questions did David ask in Psalm 10:1 when wicked and proud people persecuted him and seemed to prosper in their sin?

b. Have you ever gone through a time where the Lord seemed very distant or that His Presence or the smile of His acceptance was hidden from you? (This isn't a literal experience, but the Holy Spirit can enable us to have this sense in our relationship with Him.) Psalm 22 is another Messianic Psalm from David. What Jesus experienced on the cross was seen and experienced and written down for us to glean greater understanding of His sufferings. What "why" question did David (and Jesus) ask the Father in Psalm 22:1?

c. Do you have any "why" questions right now? Briefly write out what they are as if you were writing to Jesus. (Please do not feel as though you need to openly share this if you are part of a group and want to keep this between you and the Lord.)

9.	It should bring us great comfort to know that Jesus understands our tribulations in life and in our soul. For us to know Jesus' character and His Word more intimately, suffering and trials are our greatest opportunities. The valley of our weeping opens a doorway to hope (Hosea 2:15) where Jesus comes and wants to draw closer to us. Satan knows about this golden opportunity and will do whatever he can to turn a heart away from the Lord.
	a. One very persuasive way Satan attacks people when they experience pain and suffering is to sov seeds of DOUBT in a person's thoughts. Doubt can attack the character of God in a multitude of ways.
	1) What issue did Job have doubts about from Job 23:3, 9?
	Summarize the promise of Psalm 139:1-3 in response.
	2) What doubt did Satan hiss into Eve's ears in Genesis 3:1?
	What does Psalm 119:160 say?
	3) Satan will try and make you question God's goodness in light of a hurting world and suffering that he has brought at times. What does Psalm 25:8, 86:15, and 119:68 all say is true?

	hen you are tempted to doubt what God is doing, what He said, or who He is, what can you o?
b.	Again, it is imperative that the Christian be MOST affected by the Word of God rather than our feelings and experiences in life. What encouragement and truth does Jesus give us in John 16:33?
c.	Read Mark 13:24-27 again. We are given a picture of the world literally crumbling apart. The creation that was meant to give light now turns to darkness and reflectors of light become eclipsed. Just at this moment of ultimate darkness on earth, God's divine light appears. The clouds that made life ominous become vehicles to announce the glorious arrival of the Son of God. Where else in scripture do you remember that darkness preceded light?
d.	Of all of the dark places on the earth, scripture describes the human heart as the darkest. Write out 2 Corinthians 4:6 here.
e.	If the Lord can take the darkest heart, filled with caverns of filth and nebulous sin, and illuminate it with the glory and radiance of Jesus with just one command, then do not despair over those you may be praying for. Remember where you came from or where you COULD have gone if not for saving grace. Write down the initials of those who need the light of Jesus' face to shine within their dark heart and take a few minutes to bring these precious souls to Jesus.

"You are a chosen generation...His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9

10.	In a moment, everything that was catastrophic, devastated and dark is transformed by the brilliance of
	Jesus' second coming. This is a global unmistakable event where every eye will see Him, as written in
	Mark 13:26.

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b. What is the FIRST action of Jesus upon His return? (Mark 13:27)

a. Rehearse what John writes will happen from Revelation 1:7-8.

c. Of all the things that the eternal, Almighty, King of Kings COULD do, we see His Shepherd heart first. Do you have people in your life and/or family that you are separated from? Do you have a prodigal child? Are you married to someone that may be present physically but you are separated by sin and darkness spiritually? Do you have someone that you love that you used to be close to, but life and circumstances have separated you and there is virtually no more fellowship? Explain briefly.

d. When Jesus knew the disciples' hearts sunk with sorrow after hearing of His soon departure, He sought to bring them comfort through the powerful promise from John 14:1-3. In contrast to the separations, rejections, and sin which distances people from one another, how does Jesus' words bring you hope and encouragement?

11. Read Ephesians 2:13-17. The Holy Spirit is still working in this way today.
a. How does true unity come about (vs 13) and what happens to division (enmity) between people when they all come to the cross?
b. Reflecting back on your answer for 10c. regarding the divisions and separations in your life, write out a prayer applying the truth from Ephesians 2:13-17 to your circumstances. Remember that Jesus' heart is that we would be one (John 17). Be encouraged that He has been praying along these lines for any division or separation you may be experiencing right now.
"Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation." ~ C. H. Spurgeon Read Mark 13:28-37
12. In previous studies we learned how Jesus likened Israel to the fig tree. After He has addressed the signs to look for concerning these three separate events (the temple's destruction, the sign of His coming, and the end of the age), He uses a parable about the nation to indicate which generation will actually be the eyewitness to the prophecy's fulfillment. In 1948, when Israel returned to the land and became a nation, Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones being resurrected was fulfilled (Ezekiel 37). Another picture is this fig tree that begins to thrive and blossom.
a. Fill in the blanks from Ecclesiastes 3:1 and note the words you write specifically.
To, there is a,
a time for every under heaven.

	b.	Everything created is subject to a graciously divine timetable of God's called "seasons." Each of these seasons are pregnant with divine purposes. We may think of temperature changes, allergies, school schedules, and other attributes that come with our standard calendar year, but Jesus gives us a far different list of purposes in Ecclesiastes 3:2-8. Which ones stick out to you the most? Briefly explain why.
	c.	What is the promise and truth given to us from Ecclesiastes 3:11?
	d.	Notice back in Mark 13:31 that there is even a "season" for heaven and earth's existence. Seeing that God's Word is permanent, unchanging, non-seasonal, and absolutely secure in its permanency, what kind of comfort or joy do you get from this truth? Write out why you are thankful to Jesus for making this comment.
13.	dim r earth ering but a Now	rinthians 13:12 says that we are only observant of future prophetic events through dark lenses or reflections. We only know things partially, but it's a season that will change. When heaven and pass away and we are united with the Lord in heaven, the glory will be incomparable to the suffs we have had on earth (Romans 8:18). We will no longer have this corruptible decaying body, whole new body that is glorious, spiritual, and fashioned for heaven (1 Corinthians 15:42-49). we love Jesus Whom we have not seen, but then we will see Him as He is, face-to-face (1 John Revelation 22:4).
	a.	In light of these (and many more) promises, Jesus has a word which He repeats in Mark 13:32-37 that we are to be doing today, tomorrow, and every day until we are in heaven with Him. What is this word?

Use a concordance or a Greek Word Study reference to define it in more detail.
 b. Peter gave a great demonstration in the garden of what sleeping was, when he should have been watching and praying. What does this attitude and action of a believer prevent according to Matt 26:41?
c. In reviewing this chapter about prophetic events, there are many words that can be alarming and provoke a person to fear and worry: war, national devastation, earthquakes, famine, starvation, death, injustice, betrayal, false imprisonment, deceit, and the anti-christ. But instead of the end less amount of preparation that a believer could do practically with forewarning, Jesus says our main preparation should be the attitude of our heart; being watchful and in prayer. Is this true of you today? End your lesson with a prayer concerning the Lord's instruction and warning. Be honest before Him and rejoice that He is able to keep you from falling.
" Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the