

GOD'S PROTECTION

With its figurative language and apocalyptic images, Mark 13 can be a difficult chapter to understand. Keeping in mind the clues within the chapter (the disciples' comment regarding the temple and Jesus' response in verses 1 and 2, and the timeframe of the current generation in verse 30) help us to interpret the passage in the appropriate context: the fall of Jerusalem. What, however, can we take from this passage which references an event so far in the past?

1) God protects his people. There are at least three indications in this chapter of this great truth. First, Jesus told them of the signs of the coming events so they would be prepared to handle the situation. He told them of events that would take place before the ultimate destruction (vv.6-13). He told them the sign that would indicate the end was at hand: *"the 'abomination of desolation' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not"* (v. 14). He then told them of the urgency needed when this sign was fulfilled (vv. 15-22). He closes this section by saying, *"But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand"* (v. 23).

Secondly, God's protection is shown by His hand in the length of time the events would last. Jesus told His disciples, *"And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days"* (v. 20). Josephus, a Jewish historian at the time, tells us the siege and destruction lasted a mere 5 months (a short time for a siege). God's protection of His own is evident.

Thirdly, God's protection would be manifested in the gathering of His people to safety. Jesus said, *"And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven"* (v. 27). Historians Eusebius and Epiphanes recorded that no Christians died in the destruction of Jerusalem because, knowing the signs, they had safely escaped to the city of Pella and other places beyond the Jordan. God protects His people!

2) We need to be watchful. In the final five verses of Mark 13, Jesus uses the word "watch" four times. The destruction of Jerusalem would be a cataclysmic event in which hundreds of thousands would die. Those who heard Jesus' words and stayed alert would escape the destruction. The same holds true for us today. We do not know when our end will come, whether by death or by Jesus' return. In either case, we need to watch. Those who are watchful in Christ will be spared eternal condemnation.

Thanks be to God Who cares for and protects His own! Let us then be watchful always, and ready, for we know not when our end is at hand.

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