

The End Times



SABBATH—AUGUST 31

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Mark 12:41–44; Mark 13:1–13; Mark 13:14–18; Mark 13:19; Mark 13:24–32.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great [mighty] power and glory. The Son of Man will send his angels all around the earth. They will gather [collect] his chosen people from every part of the earth” (Mark 13:26, 27, ICB).

THIS WEEK'S LESSON STARTS with a very short story about a widow, at the end of Mark 12. Jesus uses this story to teach a powerful lesson. The rest of our lesson this week is about Mark 13. This chapter talks about what will happen to Jerusalem and its temple in the future and to God's people during the end times. Matthew 24 and Luke 21 also talk about these topics.

Mark 13 helps us to understand that these future happenings start shortly after the time that Jesus goes back to heaven and end with the Second Coming. So, these special messages are about the past and the future. Also, we must not think these messages are about things faraway in the future that won't happen for a while.

The Lord's teaching about end-time happenings is His answer to a question that His followers ask Him. Jesus often uses their questions to teach important Bible truths about things that Christians need to know for their spiritual lives. Jesus talks about what will happen in the future and teaches His followers, then and now, how to get ready for the things that are coming.



Mark 13 talks about what will happen to Jerusalem and its temple in the future and to God's people during the end times.

TWO SMALL COINS (Mark 12:41–44)

Read Mark 12:41–44. How much did the widow give? What did Jesus say about her small offering?

The Jerusalem temple was a very beautiful building. Many people brought offerings to the temple. There were 13 offering boxes in the Court of Women near the temple. The Court of Women was a space near the temple where women were allowed to enter. Jesus was sitting in the Court of Women when He saw a widow approach one of the offering boxes. She put in two “lepta.” Lepta are small coins that aren’t worth very much. A worker in those days earned a coin named a denarius each day. The widow’s offering was about a 1/32 part of a denarius. So, the widow’s offering was very small.

The widow’s offering touches Jesus’ heart. Many rich people put large sums of money in the offering boxes. Jesus doesn’t praise their gifts as they put them in. But Jesus praises the widow’s offering. Jesus says that the widow gave more than everyone else. How did she do that? Jesus says that everyone else gave an offering from their leftover money. But the widow gave all that she owned. The other givers had much left after they gave. But the widow gave everything she had to live on. So, her gift was really a rich one, even if it wasn’t worth very much money.

This story teaches us an important lesson about managing everything God gives us. We don’t give because our leaders are good. The leadership of the temple in Jesus’ day was evil. Just look at Caiaphas and Annas. These men were some of the worst leaders in the history of Israel. Jesus knew it, too. But Jesus didn’t say that people should stop giving offerings because of these evil men.

Yes, leaders are responsible for using God’s money to honor Him. But if they do not, we must continue to support God’s work on this earth with our offerings. God will bless our giving, just as He blessed this widow.

What if we don’t give our money to the church because of our leaders’ bad behavior? Then we show that the reason for our giving is about their behavior and not about thanking God. Sometimes when our leaders make mistakes, we may not want to give our tithes and offerings to the church. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. But God always wants us to give our tithes and offerings to the church. That is His plan.



The widow gave everything she had to live on.

NOT ONE STONE LEFT ON TOP OF ANOTHER STONE (Mark 13:1–13)

Read Mark 13:1–13. How do Jesus’ followers feel when Jesus tells them about what will happen to the temple? What does Jesus’ answer teach us about the end times?



Each post was as big and wide as three men standing in a circle, hand in hand, with their arms reaching around the post.

As we said yesterday, the temple was a beautiful building. Josephus, a Jewish history writer in the time of Paul, says that the Royal Walkway on the south side of the temple had 162 very tall posts. Each post was as big and wide as three men standing in a circle, hand in hand, with their arms reaching around the post. (Read *Antiquities*, 15.11.5, §§413–414.) Jesus says that the whole temple will be thrown down. The followers of Jesus thought that if the temple will be destroyed, then the earth will end, too.

“Jesus looked at the beautiful temple. What were His thoughts? His own people rejected Him! Yes, the temple was lovely, but Jesus was very sad. He said, ‘I see everything that will happen. The buildings are wonderful. You think that no one can destroy these walls. But listen to My words. The day will come when “All these stones will be thrown down. Not one will be left standing on another [stone]” ’ Mark 13:2, NLV.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 627, adapted.

In Mark 13:4, a small group, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, ask Jesus when the temple will be destroyed. They also want to know what the sign will be that shows these things are about to happen.

In Mark 13:5–13, Jesus warns His followers about what will happen when they do God’s work after He goes back to heaven. The followers will help God start and grow His church on earth. Their job won’t be easy.

God’s enemies will attack His followers and hurt them. Some of the followers will be killed for their faith. Jesus tells Peter, James, John, and Andrew that this time is not now but is coming soon. Jesus also tells His followers not to be tricked when bad things start to happen. Also, Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to help them. The Spirit will give them the words to say at the right time, even when family and friends won’t support them.

Jesus doesn’t want His followers, then or now, to fear the future. We must watch and wait on the Lord. God’s Spirit will protect us and lead us in times of trouble that are coming in the future.

THE MAN-MADE GOD THAT STANDS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD (Mark 13:14–18)

Read Mark 13:14–18. What hint does Jesus give us to help us understand what “the horrible [awful] thing that destroys” is [Mark 13:14, ICB]? Another name for this horrible thing is the “sinful man-made god standing in the house of God where it has no right [power] to stand” [NLV].

In Mark 13:14, Jesus comes to the important part of His message. He talks about the fall of Jerusalem. Jesus also talks about the “the horrible [awful] thing that destroys” [Mark 13:14, ICB]. These words are from the Book of Daniel (read Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:11; and Daniel 8:13). The Lord says the reader should understand what these words mean. So, with these words, Jesus helps His followers to see that they need to read the Book of Daniel to understand what He says.

Read Daniel 9:26, 27. Who is “the chosen one” (Daniel 9:26, ERV)? And who is “the future leader” (verse 26)?

The name “the chosen one” in Daniel 9:26 (ERV) comes from the Hebrew word “māšiah.” In English, this word is written as “Messiah,” or the “Chosen One.” A careful study of Daniel 9:24–27 shows us that the Chosen One is Jesus.

But who, then, is “the future leader” who destroys Jerusalem? Titus, a Roman general, destroyed the city. So, he must be “the future leader” that we read about in Daniel 9:26, 27. The future leader and the Chosen One are connected. Why? Because when the Jews killed Jesus, God judged them. God allowed the Romans to destroy the city as punishment for killing His Son.

What is “the horrible [awful] thing that destroys” [Mark 13:14, ICB]? As we already said, another name for this horrible thing is the “sinful man-made god standing in the house of God where it has no right [power] to stand” [NLV]. Many Bible thinkers think “the horrible thing” is Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus made the temple dirty in 167 B.C. But that idea doesn’t work. Jesus says “the horrible thing” happens after His own time here. So, it can’t mean something that happened 200 years before His work on earth. “The horrible thing” must be the Roman army who enters the land of Israel in the A.D. 60s. The army was a warning to Christians to leave the city, which they did.



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THE TERRIBLE TIME OF TROUBLE (Mark 13:19)

Read Mark 13:19. What does this verse mean?

As we learned yesterday, Mark 13:14 talks about “the horrible [awful] thing that destroys” [Mark 13:14, ICB]. In Mark 13:19, Jesus starts preaching about a new topic. Jesus starts to talk about the horrible time of trouble in the future. This time will be the worst time of trouble in human history.

Just as Mark 13:14 helps us remember Daniel 9, Mark 13:19–23 talks about the things that Daniel wrote about in Daniel 7 and 8. In these two chapters, the little-horn power hurts the people of God “for three and one-half years” (Daniel 7:25, ERV) or 1,260 days. The special message about time is the same as 1,260 real years (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). This time started in A.D. 538 and ended in A.D. 1798. In 1798, Napoleon sent his general to take the pope prisoner. During the 1,260 years, the little-horn power hurt and killed anyone who didn’t agree with the way it controlled governments or the church.



But the little-horn power would become powerful again, as we read in Revelation 13.

Read about the terrible time of trouble in Mark 13:20–23. What hope does God offer His people during this time? What warning does God give to His people when this time is about to end?

Mark 13:20 says that the time will be cut short for God’s people. History shows that the attacks ended sometime after the Protestant religion started in Europe. So, the days of trouble were shortened, just as Jesus promised. More and more people joined the Protestant churches. The little horn’s power grew weak. But the little-horn power would become powerful again, as we read in Revelation 13.

In Mark 13:21–23, Jesus warns about another danger in the end times: false prophets or messengers and false saviors. These false prophets and false saviors will trick many people before Jesus comes back. Jesus warns His followers to be careful of them.

When Jesus gave His followers this warning about false saviors, the Christian religion was very new. 2,000 years later, we see how much Jesus’ words have come true. How should His warning help us trust more in the Bible?

THE SON OF MAN WILL COME BACK! (Mark 13:24–32)

Read Mark 13:24–32. What important happening in the future do these verses talk about?

Mark 13:24–32 talks about the Second Coming of Jesus. Before Jesus comes back, there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars that show He is coming soon. The New Testament is filled with messages about this wonderful time. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul talks about the resurrection. The resurrection is the time when God will wake people up from the dead at the Second Coming. Paul talks about the Second Coming in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. In these verses, Paul also talks about Christians who wake up from the dead when Jesus comes back.

Peter talks about the Second Coming in 2 Peter 3:3–13. Peter explains that the Lord doesn't delay His promise to come back. The Lord waits because He wants everyone to confess their sins and accept His forgiveness. Revelation also talks about Jesus' coming (Revelation 1:7; Revelation 6:12–17; Revelation 14:14–20; and Revelation 19:11–21). The New Testament teaches us that the Second Coming is real. Jesus will come in person. Everyone on earth will see Him and hear Him when He comes.

What does Jesus mean when He says, “All these things will happen while some of the people of [from] this time are still [continue to be] living’ ” (Mark 13:30, ERV)? Also, what does Jesus mean when He says, “No one knows when that day or time will be’ ” (Mark 13:32, ERV)? These words have confused many people today because Jesus said these words to people who died a long time ago.

How do we explain these two verses? To answer this question, let's look at three different words Jesus uses in the verses. In Mark 13:30, Jesus uses the word “**some**,” as in “some of the people of [from] this time.” Jesus also uses the word “**that**” when He says, “that day or time.” In Mark 13, Mark uses the word “**this**” in verses 1–13. (These verses talk about what will happen in Jerusalem before it is destroyed). So, what do these three words tell us?

These words tell us that “**some** of the people of **this** time” may mean the people living during Jesus' day, who saw the Romans destroy Jerusalem. Mark 13:32 talks about the Second Coming, which is in the future and far away from Jesus' time. So, Mark, in verse 32, uses the word “**that**” to talk about things that will happen in the faraway future.



In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul talks about the resurrection.



“Those servants will be blessed when their master comes home, because he sees that his servants are ready and waiting for him” (Luke 12:37, ICB).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “On the Mount of Olives,” in *The Desire of Ages*, pages 627–636.

“We don’t know the day when Jesus will come back. So, we must watch and wait for Him. ‘Those servants will be blessed when their master comes home, because he sees that his servants are ready and waiting for him.’ Luke 12:37 [ICB]. Jesus’ followers who wait for the Lord’s coming do not sit around and do nothing while they wait. Jesus’ coming should fill our hearts with respect for Him. We should honor and obey His commandments. We should fear His work as Judge against sin. We must work hard to help people understand that they will sin if they reject God’s offer of mercy. We must watch and wait for the Lord. We must make our hearts and minds clean from sin. We make our hearts and minds clean when we obey Bible truth. We must watch carefully and work hard for the Lord. Our love for God will grow because we know Jesus is about to come back. So, we will work harder to save other people. The ones who do these things are the loyal and wise servants of God who ‘give the other servants their food at the right time.’ Luke 12:42 [ERV]. These loyal servants announce to other people the Bible truth that is needed for their time. In the same way, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses announced the special truth for their times. Jesus’ loyal servants living now will give the special warning for their time, too.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 634, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read again the story about the widow who gave all that she had (Mark 12:41–44). What does it mean for us today to give in this way?
- ② Why didn’t God stop the attacks on His church in the past 2,000 years? How does the worldwide war between God and Satan help us to answer this question?
- ③ What are the signs of Jesus’ coming? Which ones convince you the most that Jesus is coming back?
- ④ When we die, we sleep until Jesus comes back. People close their eyes, then what’s the next thing they know? They see Jesus. How does this Bible truth help us understand that Jesus’ coming is always near?

PART 7: "ADVENTISTS ARE GOOD PEOPLE"

Anush worked as a planning manager for ADRA (the Adventist Development and Relief Agency) before Father refused to allow her and Mother to worship at the Seventh-day Adventist Church in their town in Armenia. After Father told them they could go back to church, Anush started to work at ADRA again.

Father met many Adventist leaders who came to Armenia and visited ADRA.

When Anush brought guests home, Father saw that they were educated and nice people.

Father told Anush, "Adventists are good people."

Father got to know the seven women who attended the Adventist house church in his town. Father decided they were good people, too.

Then Anush was accepted at Andrews University in the United States where she would study to get her master's. ADRA and the church headquarters in Europe and Asia agreed to pay for Anush to go to school. Father's heart was touched when he heard this news. He wanted only the best for his daughter.

When Anush graduated, she became the manager of ADRA for Armenia. Father watched as she managed a number of special jobs for ADRA. Father's respect grew for both the Adventist Church and the way Adventists lived. Soon Father removed tobacco and then alcohol from the small grocery shop that he owned.

Then Father got baptized and joined the Adventist Church. He joined 21 years after Mother was baptized and nine years after Anush started to pray for him to accept God.

After his baptism, Father met the friend whose question about reading the Bible surprised him and caused him to start to go to church. Father said, "Did you know that your words changed my life? After you asked me these questions, I really started to read the Bible and follow it. Then I got baptized."

The friend asked, "What are you talking about?"

Father said, "You asked, 'If Jesus came tomorrow, would you say, 'I have read the Bible'? Would that be enough?'"

The friend said the conversation never happened. "I never said that," he said. "I would never judge you like that. You made a mistake."

At that moment, Father understood that God talked to him through his friend who didn't remember their conversation.

Part of last quarter's 13th Sabbath Offering went to open a special center in Yerevan, Armenia. Thanks for helping share the Good News about Jesus with your offerings.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Soon Father removed tobacco and then alcohol from the small grocery shop that he owned.