



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 118 - The End of the Temple, Jerusalem and Us (Mark 13)

Turning from the Temple

Jesus' work in the temple courts is finished. As He turns to leave, a disciple points out the magnificent improvements Herod the Great had made to the temple, making it truly superb. They all must have been shocked when Jesus predicted its utter destruction.

- Has your church building ever been destroyed by fire, storm or some other means? Describe the feelings of loss that members had.
- Why do we get so attached to buildings?

The temple was the actual location where God dwelt with His people. Here He showed them His grace by forgiving their sins. But the temple served another great purpose. It pointed ahead to God's Son, who would dwell among His people in His human body. As Jesus traveled among His people, He gracefully forgave their sin, healed their diseases and revealed the kingdom of God. It is strange that on Good Friday many people turned their backs on the Son of God hanging on the cross because they were on their way to the temple for Passover. For all who would continue to reject the Son and cling to the temple a horrible judgment was coming.

- How can we remind ourselves that God's presence in Word and Sacrament actually makes our church building so special, and it's not the building itself?

The Jewish Revolt

Even after Jesus was rejected by His own people and crucified outside of town, the risen Lord continued to reach out to the people of Jerusalem. He established His Christian Church in Jerusalem on Pentecost and continued to send apostles and prophets to His people for the span of more than 30 years. Some became believers, even among the priests. But the Jewish leadership and many of the people continued to reject Christ and His servants, arresting, imprisoning and beating them—even putting some to death like Stephen. Finally, their time was up and God's judgment came upon them.

The 30-year time span for Jerusalem was not too much different than the time God has given us now to repent and put our trust in Jesus. Yet, how often do we simply warm a seat in church while our minds and hearts are far away from our God and His salvation?

- Describe some distractions that keep you from worshiping in spirit and in truth?
- What are some ways we can keep our minds from wandering in worship?

God has warned us His judgment will be more severe for those who knew the truth and then turned away from salvation, than for those who never knew.

- How long have you been exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the means by which He brings that Gospel to you (Word, Baptism and Communion)?
- How can we impress the great value of God's gifts on our children?

Judgment Day

The destruction of Jerusalem reminds us of the Last Day when Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. On that terrible day when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., an eyewitness, Flavius Josephus, stood watching.

Later he wrote,

“In defiance of Caesar’s wishes, the Temple was set on fire. While the Temple was ablaze, the attackers plundered it, and countless people who were caught by them were slaughtered. There was no pity for age and no regard was accorded rank; children and old men, laymen and priests, alike were butchered; every class was pursued and crushed in the grip of war, whether they cried out for mercy or offered resistance.

“Through the roar of the flames streaming far and wide, the groans of the falling victims were heard; such was the height of the hill and the magnitude of the blazing pile that the entire city seemed to be ablaze; and the noise—nothing more deafening and frightening could be imagined.

“Undoubtedly, the smoke billowing up from that fire fulfilled Jesus’ words, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.” The day of Christ’s return will be even more terrifying for those who are not prepared for His coming. Thus it is our duty to be ready by confessing our sins and putting our trust in Christ Jesus—and to share the warning with those who are unprepared.”

- Describe the things that can keep Judgment Day in our minds and remind us why it is so important to always be ready (earthquakes, wars, the Church Year, etc.).