

Mark 13:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

Analysis

When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? The disciples asked two questions:

1. timing of temple destruction
2. signs of its fulfillment.

The Greek *pote* (πότε, 'when') seeks chronological timing, while *sēmeion* (σημεῖον, 'sign') requests identifying indicators. They assumed temple destruction coincided with end-times and Messiah's kingdom establishment—a common Jewish expectation.

Jesus' answer (vv. 5-37) addresses both near fulfillment (AD 70 temple destruction) and far fulfillment (Second Coming), blending prophetic horizons. This 'prophetic perspective' collapses timeframes—like mountain peaks appearing adjacent from distance though miles apart. The disciples couldn't distinguish timing; Jesus warned of birth pains (v. 8) preceding the end. The Old Testament prophets similarly blended near/far fulfillments (Joel 2:28-32, applied both to AD 30 Pentecost and future day of the Lord).

Historical Context

First-century Jewish apocalyptic expectation connected temple fate with Messiah's coming and end-times. Intertestamental literature (4 Ezra, 2 Baruch) linked temple rebuilding/vindication with Messiah's kingdom. The disciples, steeped in this

tradition, naturally assumed temple destruction meant world's end. Jesus' answer both confirms and corrects: yes, cataclysmic events come, but 'the end shall not be yet' (v. 7). AD 70 fulfilled the near prophecy; Christ's return awaits. Early Christians debated whether AD 70 was the Second Coming. By letter writing (2 Thessalonians, 2 Peter), apostles clarified Christ's return remained future. This interpretive challenge—distinguishing near/far prophetic fulfillments—continues in eschatological debates.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does blending near and far prophetic fulfillments—temple destruction and Second Coming—teach us to read biblical prophecy carefully?
2. What does the disciples' assumption that temple destruction meant immediate end-times reveal about human tendency to misread God's timing?
3. How should Christians balance expectant hope for Christ's return with recognition that 'the end shall not be yet'?

Interlinear Text

Εἶπὲ	ἡμῖν	πότε	ταῦτα	ἔσται	καὶ	τί	τὸ
Tell	us	when	shall these things	be	and	what	G3588
G2036	G2254	G4219	G5023	G2071	G2532	G5101	
σημεῖον	ὅταν	μέλλῃ	πάντα	ταῦτα	συντελεῖσθαι		
shall be the sign	when	shall	all	shall these things	be fulfilled		
G4592	G3752	G3195	G3956	G5023	G4931		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 24:3 (Parallel theme): And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

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