

September 29, 2019: Be on guard, keep awake! [Mk. 13]

Dear Listeners,

When the Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem events happened that confirmed his predictions of which I spoke to you previously. Slowly but surely the tensions increased and the relationship between him and the leaders got worse. The Lord Jesus, however, continued his work with his disciples, training them and teaching them for the time to come. Jesus used the opportunities that arose for that purpose. When the disciples, for instance, drew his attention to the temple and to the city of Jerusalem, Jesus shared again his predictions with them. In Mark 13 we read about this when one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" Then Jesus responded to this with these shocking predictions, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." What a shock that must have been to these disciples for whom the temple was the centre of their life with God, their worship to God!

Then the Lord Jesus and his disciples continued on their walk outside the city, and when they were sitting down on the Mount of Olives, opposite the city, they showed that they had thought about his predictions and inquired, "When will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" That's when the Lord Jesus informs them of the events to come, of the end of the temple. The disciples will be facing a difficult time while they go into the world to share the gospel with the inhabited world of those days. Meanwhile the temple will still be there in Jerusalem. Then Jesus shows from the prophecy of Daniel how it will go with the temple as well: it will be desecrated by invading armies, the Romans (which as we know happened in the years 69/70 AD). Jesus also refers to the prophecy of Isaiah when he describes the effects this all will have on nature when the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; Jesus uses Isaiah's imagery for the end of the nations such as Babylon and Edom and applies that to Jerusalem, to the temple there!

You can imagine, dear listeners, how shocking and puzzling these predictions must have been to the disciples! It will be the end of Jerusalem, yes even the end of the temple there. It will be all devastation and destruction; it will be dark in the temple! Thus Jesus foretells the times and events, the signs and significance of the judgments that will make an end to Jerusalem as centre of the worship to God! Yes and the Lord Jesus indicates that all these things will happen during their lifetime! And indeed, it did happen some 40 years after the Lord Jesus told them all these things. It has been reported, by a famous historian Flavius Josephus for instance, exactly the way the Lord Jesus describes it in Mark 13. The Roman general Titus commanded that the whole city be destroyed and the temple completely demolished! That was the end of the OT worship, the OT people of Israel, and the OT place in history of the people of the covenant!

Then we should pay special attention, dear listeners, to one of the predictions Jesus also foretold in this context: "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his

elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the ends of heaven." That is a summary of the events that will happen after this total destruction of the OT worship, of Jerusalem and the temple, and the people of Israel. That's when you will see the power and glory of the Son of Man coming into the world! From the whole world, from the ends of the earth, the Son of Man will be gathering himself a people, his NT church! That is, Jesus foretells what will happen when he will have risen and have ascended into heaven, and he will extend his power and authority over the whole earth. Then all nations and peoples will hear about him, until he has brought all his chosen people into his presence; that's no longer the chosen nation of Israel but the elect from the ends of the earth! That's what the future will be after the light in Jerusalem's temple went out!

Now, when the Lord Jesus comes to speak about that time, following the fall of Jerusalem, he can no longer be as exact as he was regarding the events that were to happen soon (i.e. within this generation yet). "Concerning that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." The Lord Jesus mentions this not to make them curious about this last phase in the history of the world, but he calls them to be awake and alert! That's a call and command that we have to heed today very much! As I mentioned, dear listener, it is during this last phase that the gospel will go out throughout the whole earth and will come to every nation under heaven. That includes us and our time and our nation! Hence that call to be awake and alert is coming to us today as well!

This urgent call and command "Be on guard, keep awake," dear listeners, is coming to you too via this message of the Voice of the Church. This call Jesus pronounced some 2000 years ago and still the end has not yet come. That means that the number of the elect isn't yet full. He is still gathering and increasing his church today. He does so by sending out his servants with the proclamation of the gospel. These servants bring that word every Sunday in his church; he also recruits the believers to share this word with their neighbours, colleagues, and acquaintances. Besides, in this time especially, we have the means of radio, TV, Internet, and other media by which this message reaches many, many people; as it does reach you today via this broadcast from the Voice of the Church! Well, the fact that it still goes out and reaches people in so many ways and along so many channels, is an amazing reality! However, the time is moving on, and it can be observed in the world (the western world especially) that people are no longer on their guard and are falling asleep. Hence the urgency of this message for all today!

Dear listeners! In our time much is going on in this world, and there is much that occupies our time and attention. People are very busy with their own lives, individualistically, and concerned about their own well-being, egoistically. All people's attention is concentrated on progress, prosperity, and pleasure, meanwhile neglecting to pay attention to the important questions of life and the purpose of life and the goal of this world. Today, and in the past weeks, I had the privilege and calling to alert you to the work of salvation in Jesus Christ. Today, especially, I have held up to you the predictions of the Lord Jesus which all have been fulfilled, and about the prediction regarding this last time. It still is the time of grace, the time of salvation, and the time to believe in him and in the hope he has brought into this world! Heed his call and repent and believe in Him!