

Function of Mark 13's discussion of the signs of the nearness of the end times

Abstract

Viewing the site of the Temple while sitting on the Mount of Olives, four of Jesus's disciples react to his statement according to Mark 13:2 that not a single stone of these great buildings will be left on another. The question they ask him is, when the destruction of the Temple will happen and what sign will accompany it. In his answer, Jesus reveals why Mark intends to relate the eschatological discourse, to cool down end-time excitement among Christian believers that surrounded the siege and destruction of Jerusalem the Temple in 70 CE and to urge cautious discernment in the face of related dramatic cosmic events. This allows the researcher to accept a possible date for the Gospel in the period between approximately 66 and 72 CE.

Key terms

Eschatological discourse, destruction of temple, deception, persecution

Introduction¹

Many researchers argue that the Gospel was probably written during the decade from 60 to 70 CE, a position already stated in the earliest sources (Anti-Marcionite prologue; Irenaeus's *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.2).² Early patristic tradition also expressed the view that Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom in the persecution after the great fire of 64 CE, placing the Gospel in Rome in the

¹ The article is based on research done for a doctoral study that was published, Nel, M. *Of that day and hour no one knows – Mark 13 as an apocalypse?* (Theology in Africa 3, Zürich, Münster: LIT, 2014).

² Cf. Donahue, J.R. The Quest for the Community of Mark's Gospel, in F. Van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett & J. Verheyden (eds.). *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*. Pp. 817-838. (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium II, Peeters: Leuven University Press, 1992), pp. 817-823 for discussion.

late 60s or early 70s of the first century CE.³ Clement of Alexandria testifies for a date earlier than the destruction of the Temple.⁴ Kleiber⁵ provides two arguments why it would not be after 70 CE: “1.Jesus sagt eine sehr viel radikalere Zerstörung voraus, als im Jahr 70 tatsächlich stattfand. Damals blieben die gewaltigen Mauern der Tempelanlage im Grossen und Ganzen unzerstört. 2.Eine Vorhersage der Zerstörung des Tempels, deren Wortlaut aber nicht zu belegen war, hat im Prozess Jesu eine Rolle gespielt (vgl. Mk 14,58).” Some scholars prefer a later date, after 70 CE.⁶ Drewermann refers to Pesch⁷ who describes the purpose of the Gospel in terms of a late date, “die christliche Gemeinde vor der Verwechslung mit einer jüdisch-apokalyptisch-zelotischen Bewegung zu schützen.” However, earlier as well as later dates have also been proposed.⁸ Is it possible to deduct from the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 what date the Gospel was written?

This article hypothesizes that the discussion of the signs of the nearness of the end of time in Mark 13 allows for a date prior to or immediately following the disaster of 70 CE. “The best evidence for the date of Mark is provided by the eschatological discourse of Jesus in chap. 13.”⁹ The question posed by Jesus’s remark about the destruction of the Temple is whether 13:2 betrays knowledge of the destruction of the Temple by Titus. One view is that Jesus’s original saying is a variant of Luke 19:44, which concerns the destruction of the city rather than the Temple specifically, and that Mark has converted a more general prediction into one concerning the Temple.¹⁰ Other views include that the source for Mark 13:2 is Q13:35a, stating that the

³ Cf. Van Eck, E. ‘A Sitz for the Gospel of Mark? A Critical Reaction to Bauckham's Theory on the Universality of the Gospels’. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 56.4 (2000), pp. 973-1008; Kloppenborg, J.S. ‘*Evocatio Deorum* and the date of Mark’. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124.3 (2005), pp. 419-450 for a detailed discussion on Mark's date of writing.

⁴ Kloppenborg, ‘*Evocatio Deorum* and the date of Mark’, p. 421.

⁵ Kleiber, W. *Das Markusevangelium*. (Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Theologie, 2010), p. 444.

⁶ Cf. discussion in Drewermann, E. *Das Markusevangelium: Zweiter Teil: Mk 9,14 bis 16,20*. (Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter, 1988), pp. 339-340.

⁷ Pesch, R. *Naherwartung: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk 13*. (KBANT, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968), p. 22.

⁸ Collins, A.Y. *Mark*. (Hermeneia, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), pp. 11-18.

⁹ Collins. *Mark*, p. 11.

¹⁰ Gaston, L. *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels*. (NovTSup 23, Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 242, 424.

deity has abandoned the “house” (temple); or that 13:2 contains a Markan construction, created from a traditional saying (such as Mark 14:58) and formulated in a manner consistent with the framework in 13:1.¹¹ Collins¹² remarks that the tendency of modern historical-critical scholarship has been to take allegedly prophetic texts that correspond precisely to historical events as *ex eventu* prophecy, ruling out *a priori* the possibility of genuine prophecy. In Mark, the “buildings” in question are clearly those of the Temple, and the prediction concerns the destruction of the Temple specifically.¹³ In this discussion of 13:1-13, it is argued that the author intentionally wants to cool down overheated apocalyptic expectations aroused by the Jewish rebellion of 66 CE by explaining what the signs of the nearness of the end do not signify before it describes the situation that will characterize the end.

By 68 CE, Nero's support in the provinces had eroded and open rebellion against his reign occurred from time to time, as was the case in Palestine with the Jewish War that raged since 66 CE. It took only the tactlessness of the Roman procurator in Palestine, Gessius Florus, to provoke a general revolt among the Jews.¹⁴ Nero had lost his best advisers, Seneca and Burrus, and he lived under the suspicion of the Senate for his purported involvement in the fire in Rome in 64 CE.¹⁵ Cornelius Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.44) wrote around 115 CE that the emperor Nero fixed the guilt for the fire that destroyed a large part of Rome on the Roman Christians, in order to shift the blame from him. Christians were chosen as the scapegoats for the fire, and their persecution continued well beyond 64 CE. “First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on evidence furnished by them a huge multitude was convicted not so much on the count of arson as hatred of the human race.” Terrible punishments were inflicted on them:

¹¹ Bultmann, R. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. (Rev. ed., tr. by J. Marsh, Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), p. 36.

¹² Collins, A.Y. *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probing of Mark in Context*. (Marquette: Marquette University, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 75.

¹³ Kloppenborg, ‘*Evocatio Deorum* and the date of Mark’, p. 430.

¹⁴ Frend, W.H.C. *The Early Church: From the Beginnings to 461*. (Second ed., London: SCM, 1982), p. 33.

¹⁵ Incigneri, B.J. *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel*. (BIS 65, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 213.

“.. they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night” (*Ann.* 15.44). In the middle of 68 CE, Nero committed suicide, ending the Julio-Claudian line of emperors. Several pretenders sought to become the next emperor, including Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. None of them succeeded in putting down his opponents. In 69 CE, General Vespasian who had successfully suppressed the Jewish rebellion became the next emperor, and his offspring would follow him, first Titus and then the Domitian, establishing a new line of emperors. In 69 and 70 CE, Vespasian was still consolidating his control and the situation was very unstable. Mark's Gospel uses apocalyptic rhetoric to describe the seriousness and hopelessness of the situation its readers experienced, and to remind them that their Master had experienced the same kind of treatment from the Romans and had promised his disciples that they would share in the persecutions.

Disciples' questions

Mark 13:1-2 is a short pronouncement or *chreia*, in which a saying of Jesus is placed in a brief narrative setting.¹⁶ This leads to a speech which is the longest and most coherent of all those attributed to Jesus in Mark, only comparable to 4:3-32. The length and coherence of Mark 13 indicate the importance of the teaching expressed here for the evangelist.¹⁷

The disciples emerge from the Temple precincts rather than from the Temple (ἱεροῦν refers to precincts)¹⁸ and they comment on the size and beauty of the Temple and its stones. It is most

¹⁶ Collins. *Mark*, p. 594; Du Toit, D.S. 'Die Danielrezeption in Markus 13', in K. Bracht & D.S. Du Toit (eds.). *Die Geschichte der Daniel-Auslegung in Judentum, Christentum und Islam: Studien zur Kommentierung des Danielbuches in Literatur und Kunst.* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), p.57.

¹⁷ Collins. *Mark*, p. 593.

¹⁸ Louw, J.P. & Nida, E.A. (eds.) *Lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains.* (Vol. 1, New York: UBS, 1988), p. 83 refers to the “surrounding consecrated area”.

probably still the second day of the Passion Week.¹⁹ An unnamed disciple remarks about the beauty of the buildings, the only place in the Gospel where such a rhetorical feature is used.

The geographical notice, Καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, links the discourse in 13 to the symbolic actions and debates described in Mark 11-12.²⁰ It should be emphasized that 13:1-4 cannot be interpreted apart from Mark 11-12,²¹ and especially the reference to the fig tree that withers from its roots after Jesus has cursed it (11:20). “Was mit dem Baum passierte, ist zugleich eine Diagnose, in welchem Zustand sich die Tempelautoritäten befinden”.²² Malbon²³ states that Jesus makes his initial entry into Jerusalem by visiting the Temple and in 12 he makes his final exit to the Temple, as if the movements of the Markan Jesus shadows the movements of YHWH in Ezekiel 11:23. Whereas Ezekiel describes that YHWH will eventually return to the Temple (43:4), Jesus’s departure from the Temple is followed by the significant prediction of its destruction.

The disciples' statement is a rhetorical question, assuming an affirmative response from Jesus, where ποταποὶ λίθοι καὶ ποταπαὶ οἰκοδομαί in context implies "what wonderful stones!" while the literal meaning is “what kind of?”.²⁴ Van Iersel²⁵ mentions that this kind of question was asked in apocalypses many times and led to great interest among its readers.

Mark uses the passive voice in v. 2 (“will be thrown down;” καταλυθῆ) and it might be original; all other versions speak about Jesus rebuilding.²⁶ As a rule, Romans regarded the destruction of cultic sites as sacrilege; they respected all cultic sites, even those of their subjects and enemies. Under specific circumstances, temples could be destroyed systematically, not as

¹⁹ Cole, V. C. *Africa Bible Commentary*. (Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006), p. 1193.

²⁰ Donahue, J.R. & Harrington, D.J. *The Gospel of Mark*. (Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, Mi.: Liturgical, 2002), p. 367.

²¹ Van Iersel, B. *Markus Kommentar*. (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1993), p. 195.

²² Van Iersel, *Markus Kommentar*, p. 195.

²³ Malbon, E.S. *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), p. 161.

²⁴ Malbon, E.S. *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*. (New Voices in Biblical Studies, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 123.

²⁵ Van Iersel, *Markus Kommentar*, p. 208.

²⁶ Schweizer, E. *The Good News according to Mark*. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1970), p. 262.

part of the collateral or accidental consequences of conflict but deliberately, and it is just such a destruction that v. 2 has in view. It has to do with the Roman siege practice of *evocatio deorum* – the “calling out” of the tutelary deity or deities of a city prior to its destruction, the “devoting” of its inhabitants to death or, more usually, slavery, and the razing of its buildings and temples. The practice of *evocatio* was sufficiently well-known and widespread that Jews might have surmised that further hostilities against Rome might well eventuate in the abandoning of the sanctuary by the deity and its consequent destruction, leaving room for a pre-70 date for the creation of v. 2.²⁷

A small group of four disciples gather around Jesus, the first four that he called to be his followers (Peter, James, John, and Andrew), according to 1:16-20²⁸ and they continue the conversation about the Temple while gazing at it across the Kidron Valley from the Mount of Olives. In the discourse, the implied reader is not being addressed directly, but is “listening in,” as it were, on the second-level discourse. Yet the omniscient narrator is free to use the second-person narratee to draw the reader into direct relationship with the second-level narrator. This device is particularly effective, writes Smith,²⁹ for we know that in Mark the points of view of the implied author, the omniscient narrator and the protagonist (the one and only second-level narrator in the Gospel) are identical. There are clear signs of the presence of the narratees in the narrative, the four disciples. They are on the same level as the narrator, which is extradiegetic and heterodiegetic.³⁰

Jesus sits (Καὶ καθημένον αὐτοῦ), the posture of the teacher and “authoritative position of rabbis while teaching”.³¹ The Mount of Olives is parallel to the eastern side of the city and

²⁷ Kloppenborg, ‘*Evocatio Deorum* and the date of Mark’, p. 434.

²⁸ Cf. 1:29 as well; Donahue & Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 368; Kleiber, *Das Markusevangelium*, p. 245.

²⁹ Smith, S.H. *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel*. (Biblical Seminar 38, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 188.

³⁰ Cf. Tolmie, D.F. *Narratology and Biblical Narratives: A Practical Guide*. (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999), p. 119.

³¹ Dowd, S. & Malbon, E.S. ‘The Significance of Jesus’s Death in Mark: Narrative Context and Authorial Audience’. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125.2 (2006), p. 290; Collins. *Mark*, p. 602; cf. Malbon, E.S. ‘Narrative

provides a good view of the Temple complex, and the whole city.³² Zechariah 14:4 sketches the Mount of Olives as the site of YHWH's final victory over Israel's enemies, and Josephus (*Ant. XX, 5*; *Bell. Jud. II, 17-18*) tells how an Egyptian prophet urged a crowd to go with him to this place where he promised that at his command the city's walls would fall down. They sit “opposite the Temple,” (καθημένον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν κατέναντι τοῦ ἱεροῦ), opposite the institution of the Temple and its leaders - chief priests, scribes, and elders.³³

The four asks Jesus κατ’ ἰδίαν, “privately,” reminding the reader of Jesus’s public communication *contra* private interpretation as in Mark 4:1-9 and 4:10-20; 7:1-16 and 7:17-23; 9:14-27 and 9:28-29; and 10:1-9 and 10:10-12. “This contrast between public and private teaching seems to be a favourite compositional device of Mark”.³⁴

Their question is, when (πότε) will the destruction of the Temple happen and what will be the sign when these things will be accomplished? It is clear that “Temple” is associated with more than a mere building. Malbon³⁵ writes that the Temple itself becomes part of Jesus’s past, and its desecration and destruction part of the disciples' future, and part of the readers' present (13:14). Jesus abandons the Temple not because its sacrality has been profaned but because he experiences a breakdown of the sacred / profane distinction.

The question has two parts with the first asking when “this” or “these things” will be (Εἰπὼν ἡμῖν πότε ταῦτα ἔσται), referring to the prophecy in v. 2 and thus to the destruction of the Temple, and the second question anticipating the discourse itself with its request to reveal the “sign” that will accompany “these things” (τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα).³⁶ The answer to the first question is found in 13:32. The second question is first

Criticism: How does the Story Mean?, in J.C. Anderson & S.D. Moore (eds.). *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. (Second ed., Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 32; cf. 4:1.

³² Donahue & Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 368.

³³ Malbon, E.S. ‘Galilee and Jerusalem: History and Literature in Marcan Interpretation’, in W.R. Telford (ed.). *The Interpretation of Mark*. (Studies in New Testament Interpretation, second ed., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), p. 123.

³⁴ Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, p. 76.

³⁵ Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*, p. 124.

³⁶ Collins. *Mark*, p. 602.

answered in 13:7-31 in a negative way, and then in 13:28-29 in a positive way. The discourse is based on this “Zwei-Äonen-Schema,”³⁷ preparing the way for the subject of the discourse, which is eschatological as “these things” presumably refers to the events preceding and accompanying the destruction of the Temple.³⁸ Jesus begins his discourse by speaking about signs that the end is not near. Although the disciples are living in the end-times, the end of the end-times is not near and will not occur with the destruction of the Temple, as Jesus indicates in his discourse. The question and especially Jesus’s answer is therefore not only about the destruction of the Temple, an event in history, but also about the end of the world, the consummation of the present order.³⁹ The reason for Mark including the eschatological discourse in his Gospel can be found in this remark, that his readers were anxious about what was happening in and around Jerusalem and that he warns them not to be led away by eschatological expectations of the imminent end. In this way the Gospel can be connected to the historical events surrounding the Jewish Rebellion of 60-70 CE.

Jesus’s answer: Many will mislead you

Mark 13:5-23 is carefully constructed around an elegant inclusion in answer to the four disciples' three questions and Jesus’s two-staged response in vv. 5-37.

A The need to take heed (Βλέπετε) - v. 5

B Many who will try to lead you astray (πλανήσουσιν) - v. 6

B¹ False prophets and false christos who will try to lead you astray

(ἀποπλανᾶν) - v. 22

A¹ Warning to take heed (βλέπετε) - v. 23.⁴⁰

³⁷ Du Toit, ‘Die Danielrezeption in Markus 13’, p.58.

³⁸ Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 262.

³⁹ Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 267.

⁴⁰ Cf. Moloney, F.J. *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, Mi.: BakerAcademic, 2002), p. 249.

Jesus's speech does not begin with a rhetorical introduction (*proemium* or *exordium*). It rather opens abruptly but powerfully with an admonition that one would expect to find in a prophetic oracle or wisdom book.⁴¹ The admonition (v. 5b) forms a small unit with v. 6, which gives the explanation for the warning, and the explanation follows without a connecting participle. The warning about false prophets is the first sign of something new that is predicted and that goes much further than the desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem, with cosmic signs announcing the coming of the Son of man in the clouds. On one level, vv. 5b-37 is a speech of Jesus, in answer to questions posed to him by his disciples. He is a character in the narrative. On another level, the speech indirectly provides the audience of listeners / readers with an interpretation of the first Jewish war with Rome. "The greater part of the subject matter of the speech pertains to Jesus's followers and how they are to behave in light of the coming days, particularly in light of the appearance of the Son of man. Specifically, Jesus is concerned with how his followers act in light of his death and his imminent return".⁴² The rhetorical exigency with which Mark was faced was the appearance of false prophets and claimants to messianic status before and during this war.⁴³

This verse begins with $\delta\epsilon$, a significant word as the disciples ask him about the time and sign of the destruction, *but* he answers them by warning them about being misled by false prophets and messiahs. The disciples will be under threat and are warned to be on the watch ($\beta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\tau\epsilon$). Mark uses this word, which has the basic meaning of "look," extensively and consistently links it with a call to discernment.⁴⁴ It is "a call to see past the externals and recognize the deceptions that lurk beneath the persuasive words and deceptive signs".⁴⁵

⁴¹ Collins. *Mark*, p. 602.

⁴² Shively, E.E. *Apocalyptic Imagination in the Gospel of Mark: The Literary and Theological Role of Mark 3.22-30*. (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), p. 199.

⁴³ Collins, A.Y. 'The Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13 in Historical Context'. *Biblical Research* 41 (1996), pp. 5-8.

⁴⁴ Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, p. 245; cf. Geddert, T.J. *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology*. (JSNTSup 26, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), pp. 81-87.

⁴⁵ Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology*, pp. 86.

Jesus's speech begins with ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἤρξατο λέγειν αὐτοῖς, "he began" plus the infinitive, used twenty-six times in the Gospel and characterizing Markan narrative.

The intended purpose of βλέπετε is "to cool down end-time excitement and to urge cautious discernment in the face of dramatic cosmic events,"⁴⁶ and it is repeated in vv. 9, 23, and 33.

There are some who will try to lead the disciples astray, and such people are from the Christian ranks (v. 6). The dependent clause, λέγοντες ὅτι Ἐγώ εἰμι, could be translated either absolutely, "saying, 'I am,'" or taken as a claim of divinity, or "saying, 'I am he'", and taken as a claim to be Jesus returning as the glorious Son of man. In the last case, it would be understood in the historical context of the expectation of the return of Elijah (cf. 6:16, Herod Antipas thinking that Jesus was John returned from the dead).⁴⁷ This interpretation does not, however, explain how the warning is linked to the prediction of wars, rumors of wars, and the related eschatological traditions that follows in vv. 7-8. A second approach is to paraphrase the main clause with the words, "Many will come with the power and authority of Jesus" by analogy with two passages in the Septuagint that also use verbs of motion in connection with the phrase ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί, "in my name" (cf. 1 Sam 17:45; 2 Chron 14:10). The implication would be that the many coming in Jesus's name would be Jews and not followers of Jesus (cf. 9:38-39). The false prophets claim to come as the final appearance of the Messiah. This might refer to persons claiming to act with Jesus's authority or pretenders claiming to be Jesus *redivivus*, perhaps even claiming divine status.⁴⁸ ἐπὶ should rather be translated "with my name".⁴⁹ These persons claim to be either Christ himself who has reappeared, or the reincarnation of Christ. The New Testament provides evidence of such extreme fanaticism (2 Thess 2:1-12; Acts 20:29-30; 1

⁴⁶ Donahue & Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 369.

⁴⁷ Dautzenberg, G. 'Elija in Markusevangelium', in F. Van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett & J. Verheyden (eds.). *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*. (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium II, Peeters: Leuven University Press, 1992), p. 1077; Collins. *Mark*, p. 603.

⁴⁸ Witherington, B. *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Historical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), p. 343.

⁴⁹ Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, p. 81.

John 2:18). Justin (*Ap. I,26:1-3*) reports that Simon the Magician was addressed as God in prayer, and Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer. I,23:1*), survivor of the holocaust of 177 AD and bishop of the church in Gaul,⁵⁰ asserts that Simon appeared among Jews as “the Son,” among Samaritans as “the Father” and among Gentiles as “the Spirit”.⁵¹ The reference is to messianic pretenders in the period leading up to the destruction of the Temple. Many were eventually misled by such pretenders, such as the Zealots, and contributed by their rebellious attitude to the destruction of the Temple.⁵² Messianic claimants are described in Acts 5:36-37 as well as in Josephus' *Antiquities* (XVII, 10; XX, 5, 8). That these pretenders will be successful is implied in καὶ πολλοὺς πλανήσουσιν.

13:7 begins a new unit, marked by δὲ, “now,” “and” or “but” and a change of subject matter. The relation between the admonition with explanation (vv. 5b-6) and this unit (vv. 7-8) is not explicit, but the latter is probably meant to provide a context for the former.⁵³ The period Jesus is talking about will be characterized by wars and the rumors of wars but this should not alarm the disciples. These things must (δεῖ) take place but it is not yet the end. “Must’ is generally interpreted as a signal of divine agency”.⁵⁴ The δεῖ indicates that what is about to happen is part of an eschatological plan predetermined in God's counsel. The assurance that these things are part of God's plan and purpose holds assurance and comfort for the Christian believers; nothing is going to take place on earth that falls outside the governance of God.⁵⁵ Signs that seem to indicate that it is the end should not mislead the disciples. The “end” in this context refers to the destruction of the Temple (vv. 14-20) before Jesus designates other signs (vv. 21-25) culminating in the final end, the coming of the Son of man (vv. 26-27). *4 Ezra* 13:31 also

⁵⁰ Frend, *The Early Church*, p. 66.

⁵¹ Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 268.

⁵² Myers, C. *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), p. 68.

⁵³ Collins. *Mark*, p. 605.

⁵⁴ Dowd & Malbon ‘The Significance of Jesus’s Death in Mark’, p. 278..

⁵⁵ Donahue & Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 369.

predicts that wars will accompany the end: “They shall plan to make war against one another, city against city, place against place, people against people, and kingdom against kingdom.” Other signs accompanying the wars and rumors of wars are earthquakes and famines. “With the footprints of the Messiah: presumption increases, and dearth increases. The vine gives its fruit and wine at great cost” (*Mish. Sot.* 9:15). These signs are metaphors that in apocalyptic language became stereotypical, “absolute Metaphern”⁵⁶ because they came to possess a truth in pragmatic sense, a *vérité a faire*, in the sense that they regulate “die fundamentalen, tragenden Gewissheiten, Vermutungen, Wertungen (indizieren), aus denen sich die Haltungen, Erwartungen, Tätigkeiten und Untätigkeiten, Sehnsüchte und Enttäuschungen, Interessen und Gleichgültigkeiten einer Epoche”.⁵⁷

The opening temporal clause, “when you hear of wars and reports of wars” (ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε πολέμους καὶ ἀκοὰς πολέμων) in v. 7a is an indirect prediction while the main clause is an expression of reassurance, “do not be disturbed” (μὴ θροεῖσθε). The statement in v. 7c, “it must happen” (δεῖ γενέσθαι) is an allusion to Daniel 2:28-29 (OG and Theodotion use the same words) and Daniel 2:45 (in Theodotion). The reference to Daniel appropriates that the events revealed in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, which “must happen” at the end of the days, were only now occurring or about to occur. The implication is further that the wars and rumors of wars belong to the events of the last days.⁵⁸ The verse ends with 7d, “but the end is not yet” (ἀλλ’ οὐπω τὸ τέλος), instructing the audience that the wars do not themselves constitute “the end” (τὸ τέλος) but only the first in a series of eschatological events. The first part of Jesus’s answer is concerned with dampening eschatological expectations – the end is not yet.

⁵⁶ Zimmermann, R. ‘Paradigmen einer Metaphorischen Christologie: Eine Leseanleitung’, in J. Frey, J. Rohls & R. Zimmermann (eds.). *Metaphorik und Christologie*. (Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 120, Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), p. 8.

⁵⁷ Blumenberg, H. *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*. (Rev. ed., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), p. 25.

⁵⁸ Collins. *Mark*, p. 605.

These are but the birth pangs indicating that the birth is nearing (ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων ταῦτα). ὠδίνων should be interpreted in terms of the usage in the Septuagint where it is used to refer to judgment and Israel's suffering and especially the destruction of a city, and the city most frequently referred to is Jerusalem, likened to a woman in labour (cf. Is 13:8; 26:17; 66:8-9; Mic 4:9-10; Hos 13:13; Jer 4:31; 6:24; cf. Rom 8:22). Pitre⁵⁹ adds that “birth pangs” can also refer to the coming of the Messiah, and he provides two examples in the Hebrew Bible, in Micah 5:2-4 and Jeremiah 30:5-9. The Messiah will come forth after the birth pangs of God's people. “Birth pangs” is a technical term in Jewish apocalyptic thought used also to refer to eschatological rebirth.⁶⁰ That this is only the beginning suggests that the travail will be an extended process, as 13b confirms: “he who endures to the end will be saved” (ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος οὗτος σωθήσεται). These signs are part of God's eschatological process and the implication is that he is determining the process. The same image is found in one of the Thanksgiving Hymns from Qumran, which describes in terms relating to childbearing the advent of a messianic figure: “Like a woman in travail with her first-born child, upon whose belly pangs have come and grievous pains” (1QH11:7-8 [formerly 3:7-8]).⁶¹ Kleiber⁶² discusses another consideration: “Diese Leiden sind nicht sinnlose Quälerei, sondern durch sie hindurch wird Gott neues Leben schenken.” Can one infer from this description that there will be a period of relief after the birth pangs, or that it is the final birth pains that come just before the baby is born?⁶³

The items listed here correspond with those mentioned in Revelation 6, and even in the same order, indicating the generality of the signs. It seems that it reflects a stock list of disasters and travails in eschatological terms. By insisting that these events are only the ἀρχὴ, Jesus continues his effort to cool down end-time excitement and to place these events in the unfolding of God's

⁵⁹ Pitre, B.D. *The Historical Jesus, the Great Tribulation and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement*. (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Notre Dame University, 2004), pp. 267-8.

⁶⁰ Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 269.

⁶¹ Vermes, G. *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*. (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 292.

⁶² Kleiber, *Das Markusevangelium*, p. 248-9.

⁶³ Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 269.

large plan that will eventually end in τὸ τέλος (the word also carries the meaning of “purpose”).⁶⁴ The disciples, and through them the readers, must understand that the events in Jerusalem is a part of the history of sin, chaos, and tragedy that precede and will continue after the destruction of Jerusalem.⁶⁵

The function of the predictions in vv. 7-8 differs from the function of the many false prophets that may deceive the audience. The predictions of wars and rumors of wars are general apocalyptic commonplaces and any audience can easily associate these motifs with historical events in their own immediate situation.⁶⁶

The assurance, ἀλλ’ οὐπω τὸ τέλος, refers primarily to the destruction of the Temple (13:14-20), and not the coming of the Son of man and the gathering of the elect (13:26-27), with some signs indicating the end-times (13:5-13) and others indicating the end of the end-times (13:21-25).

Jesus’s answer: You will be persecuted

The temporal relation between vv. 9-13 and 7-8 is not explicit, but they are probably meant to be contemporary.⁶⁷ Vv. 9-13 consists of admonition, prediction, instruction, and promise. This is the second of five words of encouragement that Jesus speaks to his disciples in the course of his description of the end-times - Βλέπετε. The others are found in vv. 5, 23, 33 and 37, and the content is the same: “Take heed, be on the watch out!” (Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ). Do not worry about what you cannot control; rather, prepare yourselves for what is awaiting you. In this way, the eschatological discourse is punctuated with warnings to be on guard and to be cautious before jumping to the conclusion that whatever is happening now is τὸ τέλος.⁶⁸ In v. 5

⁶⁴ As Kleiber, *Das Markusevangelium*, p. 248 shows. Cf. Donahue & Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 369.

⁶⁵ Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, p. 255.

⁶⁶ Collins. *Mark*, p. 606.

⁶⁷ Collins. *Mark*, p. 606.

⁶⁸ Donahue & Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 370.

the verb is used to warn the disciples about others; in v. 9 it warns them to watch themselves, to ensure that they do not fail to grasp the profound import of their mission to the world, and that they do not fail in their faith or task.⁶⁹ The phrase is used without an accompanying substantial clause, making it a typical Markan expression.⁷⁰

The first four signs refer to external factors, persons and catastrophes that will occur and influence the Christian community. The next four signs are internal, within the control of the disciples. They will be dragged before councils (συνέδρια, referring to Jewish judicial councils functioning under Roman dispensation and allowing Jews to apply and implement their religious laws within certain parameters defined by the Roman authorities). The most important of the Sanhedrin was the Jerusalem council but these councils were also established in other important centers of the Jewish *Diaspora*. Disciples will be beaten in synagogues (εἰς συναγωγὰς δαρήσεσθε) for heresy, the infamous forty lashes minus one that Paul received several times (2 Cor 11:24-25a; the punishment is based on Deut 25:3, allowing for one lash to be left out should one make a mistake in counting). That the persecution will certainly occur is confirmed when Jesus repeats three times in 13:9-13 that they will be handed over to the authorities, and even their own family members will betray them. “Persecution should be viewed from an eschatological perspective. It is yet another illustration of what has to happen at the end of times. Persecution is indicative of that end-time, and in fact continues this perspective beyond the destruction of the temple, yet it is no more a sign for speculating about the timing of the end than any other dramatic event in history”.⁷¹ The disciples did not understand that the Messiah would have to suffer, and that it is true of his followers as well. “Man kann sicher sein, dass Petrus und die Jünger unter Messias nicht einer leidenden Messias

⁶⁹ Beasley-Murray, G.R. *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse*. (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1993), p. 400. (Revision of Beasley-Murray, G.R. 1954. *Jesus and the Future*.)

⁷⁰ Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 269.

⁷¹ Verheyden, J. ‘Persecution and Eschatology’, in F. Van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett & J. Verheyden (eds.). *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*. (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium II, C. Leuven: Peeters, Leuven University Press, 1992), p. 1158.

verstanden haben”.⁷² “Governors” would include Pontius Pilate, Felix and Festus (cf. Acts 23:24; 24:27, and “kings” would include Herod Antipas and Agrippa I.

Disciples will also be delivered to Roman governors and rulers to stand trial. There they will have the occasion to bear testimony before the rulers (καὶ ἐπὶ ἡγεμόνων καὶ βασιλέων σταθήσεσθε ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς). To read into these words that the subject here is not general abuse but rather specific punishment for evangelizing, as Witherington⁷³ does, is not warranted. The reference is rather to the opportunity to witness about Jesus before the rulers; εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς may also be translated, “for evidence against them,” indicating that the rulers and their court will be held accountable before God's judgment throne for hearing the gospel of the kingdom from the mouth of those they persecuted.⁷⁴ What is important is that the disciples will be living in a hostile environment, and each time their accusers persecute them will be an opportunity for them to witness of their faith.

Nero was the first Roman emperor to distinguish between Jews and Christians when he singled out the Christians and blamed them for instigating the fire that burned down a part of Rome in 64 CE. Christians were accused of propagating a *religio nova*. Suetonius (*Nero* 16.2) says Christians were guilty of *superstitio*, a charge repeated by other prominent Roman writers such as Cicero, Tacitus, Martial, Juvenal, Ovid, Quintilian, Seneca, and Plutarch. Because they refused to partake in public games, public sacrifices, and the military, and because of their exclusive monotheistic approach to religion, Christians (and Jews) were perceived as antisocial and *atheoi*. Jews and Jewish Christians were also associated with the political and military problems that their *Heimat* in Palestine caused for the Roman Empire with its repeated

⁷² Weeden, T.J. ‘Die Häresie, die Markus zur Abfassung seines Evangeliums Veranlasst hat’, in R. Pesch (ed.), *Das Markusevangelium*. (Wege der Forschung CDXI, Herausgegeben, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), p. 240.

⁷³ Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Historical Commentary*, p. 344.

⁷⁴ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse*, p. 402; cf. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, p. 256.

rebelliousness.⁷⁵ Kühsehelm⁷⁶ emphasizes that, for the gospel writers, the sufferings predicted for the disciples are not to be experienced as meaningless. Their fate is deliberately set in parallel with that of Jesus, and also in a line of continuity with that of the Old Testament prophets. Further, the sufferings are the means by which the mission of the church can be continued.

Brandenburger⁷⁷ answers the question what the function of these signs was: “In der Zukunft, wenn die Zeichen eintreffen, erfüllen sie dann für die Eingeweihten die Aufgabe, untrüglich das nahe Bevorstehen des Einschreitens Gottes und damit der Heilswende erkennen zu lassen.”

13:10 explains what disciples will witness in a hostile environment but they should remember that this is part of God's eschatological plan; another δεῖ indicates that there is a divine necessity in the proclamation of the gospel to all nations. Brandenburger⁷⁸ suggests that the text (in its parallel in Matt 25:31-32a) goes back to the theophanies found in the Hebrew Bible (Ez 38; Zech 14; Joel 4; Pss 2; 68; 72; 110) but it also demonstrates “dass die Wendung ‘alle Völker’ schon vor solchem Rückgriff eine erhebliche Bedeutung im Zusammenhang urchristlicher weltweiter Mission und ihrer theologischen Reflexion gehabt hat.” In the past, some researchers interpreted the verse as an indication that the prediction occurred after the fact because Jesus did not foresee the Gentiles entering the kingdom of God. Mark's explicit mentioning of Jesus's visiting Transjordan, the *Decapolis*, and the area around Tyrus and Sidon, and performing miracles and exorcisms among non-Jewish people shows that Jesus witnessed to the Gentiles as well, providing a paradigm for his followers. The gospel must be preached first (πρῶτον) to all nations, with “first” indicating that the disciples' faithfulness in fulfilling Jesus's command to preach the gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) in some manner affects the

⁷⁵ Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Historical Commentary*, p. 35.

⁷⁶ Kühsehelm R. *Jüngerverfolgung und Geschick Jesu. Eine Exegetisch-Bibeltheologische Untersuchung der synoptischen Verfolgungsankündigungen Mk 13, 9-13 par und Mt 23, 29-36 par.* (Österreichische Biblische Studien 5, Klosterneuburg: Verlag Österreichisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), p. 207.

⁷⁷ Brandenburger, E. *Markus 13 und die Apokalypik.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), p. 112.

⁷⁸ Brandenburger, *Markus 13 und die Apokalypik*, p. 103.

length of the birth pangs. *πρῶτον* maintains the tension between the missionary activity of the disciples and the inevitable end of the world, which will come.⁷⁹ In this way, Jesus greatly extends the timetable of the divine plan until the gospel has been preached to all nations of the world (cf. Rom 11:25-26a).⁸⁰ The verse is a declaration of eschatological teaching concerning the sequence of events in the time before the divine intervention.⁸¹ “Damit war aber ein Gegengewicht zu einer extremen Naherwartung geschaffen: Die heilvolle Botschaft, wie sie Markus in seiner Erzählung von Jesus Leben und Sterben entfaltetete, gilt allen *Völkern*, also gerade auch der nichtjüdischen Menschheit”.⁸² The worldwide proclamation of the gospel is of primary importance to Mark (cf. 4:32; 11:17; 15:39). Under no circumstances can it be omitted from a survey of the future.⁸³

The worldview Jesus teaches his followers involves the assumptions that God's kingdom has come; that followers are to cross boundaries to proclaim this good news to the ends of the earth (13:10, 27); and the mission is urgent because the end of history will soon follow (13:5-37).⁸⁴ Mark depicts his audience as a loose-knit social network based on hospitality as disciples go from place to place proclaiming the gospel (1:17; 6:7-13; 10:29-30).⁸⁵ Instead of becoming impure due to contact with those outside the realm of God's chosen, Jesus and his disciples make clean that which was unclean by spreading purity, forgiveness, and wholeness.⁸⁶ The Jewish leaders guard the boundaries to prevent what is holy from coming in, and the followers of Jesus overcome boundaries until they should reach the end of the world, a goal considered attainable within a generation after the death of Jesus (13:26-31).⁸⁷

⁷⁹ Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, p. 257.

⁸⁰ Donahue & Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 370.

⁸¹ Collins. *Mark*, p. 606.

⁸² Kleiber, *Das Markusevangelium*, p. 250.

⁸³ Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 270.

⁸⁴ Rhoads, D. ‘Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries’, in J.C. Anderson & S.D. Moore (eds.). *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. (Second ed., Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 141.

⁸⁵ Cf. Kee, H.C. *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).

⁸⁶ Rhoads, ‘Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries’, p. 156.

⁸⁷ Rhoads, ‘Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries’, p. 158.

13:11 is best taken as a continuation of v. 9. The disciples will be delivered up to authorities but they will receive divine enablement, not to be saved from persecution but to witness with wisdom and conviction about the gospel because the Holy Spirit will be representing them; they will not be speaking but the Spirit will give to them what to say when the time comes to plead their cause. The frequent occurrence of παραδιδόντες has already been noted as a repeated term in this section and a key word of warning to the disciples. Schweizer⁸⁸ thinks that the concept inherent in the Jewish Scriptures that the Spirit is given to special persons for specific purposes lies behind these words, that the Spirit is given to the martyrs with the view of enabling them to witness to their Lord before the hostile authorities (μαρτύριον should be interpreted as “to tell them the Good News”). For the Holy Spirit as παράκλητος or defense attorney, compare John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, and 1 John 2:1.⁸⁹ Most early Christians would have been terrified at the prospect of having to defend themselves in a public trial, as the greatest majority of them were not trained as orators or jurists.

The phrase, ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ, is repeated at the end of the discourse, in 13:32. The term ὥρα in Mark is used in a technical sense, according to Gray,⁹⁰ conveying the sense of the greatest eschatological tribulation. Connected to the use of the noun is its repetition in the Gethsemane episode (14:35, 37, 41). With the arrival of Judas and Jesus’s betrayal, the hour has come (ἤλθεν ἡ ὥρα; 14:41).

When disciples witness faithfully they will experience resistance, even from their own families, to such an extent that family members will hand over the disciple to the authorities to be executed. The family claimed absolute loyalty from its members; Christians became part of a new household of fellow-disciples, leading to a conflict of loyalties between their earthly

⁸⁸ Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 271.

⁸⁹ Cf. Nel, M. ‘The notion of the Holy Spirit as Paraclete from a Pentecostal perspective’. *In die Skriflig* 50.1 (2016). <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i1.2095>.

⁹⁰ Gray, T.C. *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study in its Narrative Role*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 120-1.

family and their spiritual family and the resulting persecution for their belief. These experiences are apocalyptic commonplaces.⁹¹ Kleiber⁹² refers to the experience during totalitarian dictatorships that people's trust is systematically destroyed in order to establish the masters' total domination of people, leading to people betraying their family members without feelings of guilt. παραδώσει appears in vv. 9 and 11 and is based on Micah 7:6 (7:1-7)⁹³ and Isaiah 53:6, 12, a verb that features prominently in Mark 1:14 in the reference to John's arrest.⁹⁴ Brother will stand against brother, father against child, and children against their parents. Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* VII, 3.3) narrates how a son, near the beginning of the Jewish-Roman War in 66 CE, denounced his father who was the chief magistrate of the Jewish community in Antioch, accusing him of the design to burn down the city. It is not possible to know whether Mark knew about this incident.⁹⁵ The motif of divisions in families and among friends is part of Jewish apocalyptic scenarios (cf. *Jub.* 23:19; *4 Ez.* 5:9; 6:24; *2 Bar.* 70:3; *Mish. Sot.* 9:15).⁹⁶ Mark's audience would have been able to identify with these words as many of them were probably betrayed during the extended period of persecution in Rome after the burning of the city, and elsewhere in the Roman Empire at times. The disciples will experience universal hating - μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων, and it will be “on account of my name” - διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου, referring to: due to Jesus's reputation, for the sake of the proclamation about his kingdom, or because of his involvement in his disciples' lives. *Wisdom* 2:12a describes hatred towards the righteous by the wicked: “Let us lie in wait for the righteous man because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions.” Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.44) speaks of “the notoriously depraved Christians” and their “deadly superstition” deserving the worst punishment possible. Christians became the

⁹¹ Collins. *Mark*, p. 607 refers to *1 En.* 100:2; *2 Esd.* 5:9; 6:24; *Sib. O.r* 2:154-176.

⁹² Kleiber, *Das Markusevangelium*, p. 251.

⁹³ Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, p. 257.

⁹⁴ Marcus, J. *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*. (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox, 1992), p. 193; Van Iersel, *Markus Kommentar*, p. 210.

⁹⁵ Theissen, G. *The Gospels in Context*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), pp. 260-270.

⁹⁶ Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 371.

scapegoats in the community, as happened after the fire in Rome of 64 CE.⁹⁷ Disciples need to be reminded of the reality of what awaits them in the end-times in order to be able to survive these difficult times. As followers of Christ, they will share in the fate he suffered and be handed over (vv. 9, 11, 12).

That this will be a difficult time is emphasized in the words, “anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved.” σωθήσεται could mean: rescued or vindicated (cf. Phil 1:19, 28) and although Witherington⁹⁸ emphasizes that it does not refer to eternal salvation, it is probable that it goes beyond the ordinary meaning and breaks into the realm of “salvation” understood in the spiritual and eschatological sense.⁹⁹ Mark is not enunciating a doctrine of salvation by martyrdom or endurance, a form of salvation by works. What is important is that disciples remain faithful until God's plan is fully unfolded (εἰς τέλος), when the righteous will be vindicated and the wicked punished.

Moloney¹⁰⁰ emphasizes that throughout this section of the discourse with its focus on the destruction of Jerusalem the promise of an end-time salvation is always present. Here the disciples are exhorted on how to live in the period between these troubled times and the end-time (εἰς τέλος). εἰς τέλος may also refer to “completely, consummately,” a qualitative meaning found in John 13:1, but in this context it has the chronological meaning of “the end,” as demonstrated in v. 7. Patient endurance of hatred, misunderstanding and death will eventually lead to final salvation (v. 13; cf. Dan 12:12; 4 Ez. 6:25; 7:27). The verb ὑπομείνας carries the meaning of being patient but it also has the sense of waiting. It may even be linked to Micah 7:6.¹⁰¹ The Dead Sea Scrolls’ Habakkuk Commentary speaks of the final age lasting beyond all the predictions of the prophets (1QpHab. 7:9-14).¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Kleiber, *Das Markusevangelium*, p. 251.

⁹⁸ Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Historical Commentary*, p. 345.

⁹⁹ Donahue & Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 371.

¹⁰⁰ Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, p. 258.

¹⁰¹ Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, p. 258.

¹⁰² Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*, p. 295.

Synthesis

Mark 13 describes Jesus's remark that the Temple will be destroyed, leading to some disciples' question when this is going to happen, and what sign there will be that it is all about to take place. Before Jesus answers the question in terms of the coming of the Son of man and the end, introduced by cosmic signs of the darkening of sun and moon, stars falling from the sky and powers of heaven shaken, he first explains that several features will occur – deceivers endangering the Christian community, wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and famines that will serve as the beginning of the birth-pangs. It will be followed by persecution and betrayal of believers. These features that characterized the situation of Mark's readers do not signify the end that will only follow on the appalling abomination set up where it ought not to be (13:14), resulting in great distress, unparalleled since God created the world (13:18-19). For this reason, 13:1-13 indicates the situation of Mark's readers and gives away the date of the writing of the Gospel, in the period from 66 to 72 CE.