

MARK 13:3-8 WAITING FOR THE HARVEST

³ *As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"⁵ Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁸ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.*

The answer Jesus gives to the Apostles' question as to the timing of the destruction of the Temple ("these things" – see 13:2), is not a specific time or date, but rather the pronouncement that the obliteration of that structure and the surrounding events would be the signal of the beginning of the end. Historically, we know that God did use a war between Rome and Israel to destroy the Temple in 70 A.D., and Jesus did not return. In short, these events are not the end but only the signs of the coming of the end. If anyone appears in the midst of these things and claims to be the Messiah, he is a false messiah, because when the Messiah returns it will be the end.

It may take long hot days or short cold ones in order for a specific fruit to ripen, but it is only the farmer who determines when the optimum time is for the harvest. All the harsh realities of this life will help us to ripen as disciples, but the harvest will only occur when God determines that the time is right. If we are to be productive we need to look to God in the midst of the events of this world and grow in our maturity as kingdom citizens. We have no control over the time of the harvest. The only question we will have to answer is, "Where's the fruit?"

In the midst of this world Lord, help me to see the stresses and strains of this life as opportunities to mature and grow as your disciple. Produce in me the kingdom fruit of your Spirit so that I might be a witness to your kingdom here and now. Amen.