

Ministers:  
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley  
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Sunday:  
8:00 AM: WGCY  
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:  
7:00 PM: Bible Study

[gibsoncitychurchof  
Christ.com](http://gibsoncitychurchofChrist.com)

**This Past Week:**  
Worship—33  
Wednesday—fog  
Contribution—\$15,475

**For meditation:**  
**Proverbs 28.25–28**  
What is counterin-  
tuitive about v 27?

**Radio program:**  
WGCY FM, 106.3  
Sundays at 8 AM

## *God in front and back*

**For the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard. Isaiah 52.12**

When the Jews left Babylonian captivity to return to Jerusalem (52.11), they were promised a divine bodyguard. The Lord would go before them, guiding the vanguard, and He would be behind them, guarding the hindmost. This is what happened at the exodus when “the Angel of God, who went **before** the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from **before** them and **stood** behind them” (Ex. 14.19). Coming out of Egypt, the pillar of cloud led the way (Ex. 13.21); when the enemy threatened the rear of the column, the pillar of cloud stood between the Israelites and Egyptians, protecting those at the back.

**God in the vanguard.** Those who lead need to be led. Leaders are usually counted among the strong; those asked to “take the point” in combat are thought to be among the brave. But even the strong and brave need guidance. Christians have been left an example so that leaders know which way to go (1 Pet. 2.21). In every church, the true leaders are those who willingly and follow the God who leads the way.

**God at the rearguard.** The weak, the weary, and the wounded usually straggle at the back, the very place the enemy likes to pounce. But God positions Himself so that He has our back. He stands between His people and their sins, offering shelter from any assault made by the enemy against our weakness..

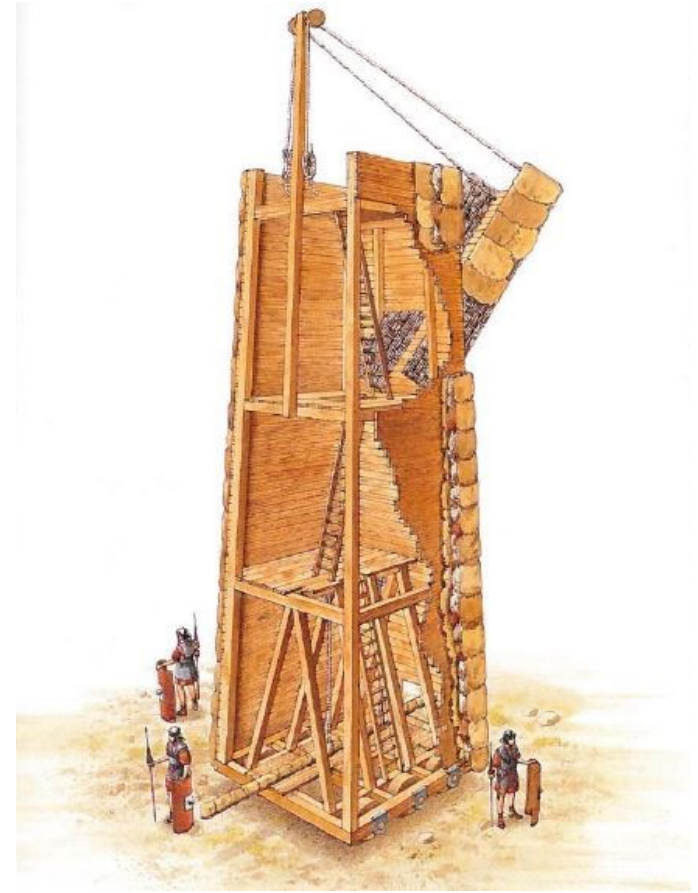
At two critical positions, front and back, God is found. He stays close to both, surrounding us with His gracious care.

kenny

# Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL

## Roman siege tower



Sermon: 1 Peter 5.10–11

*grace . . . glory . . . suffering*

*28 January 2024*

## MARK 13

### *The night the lights went out in Judah*

Chapter 13 is the longest discourse in Mark's Gospel, and may be the most misunderstood discourse in Mark. I'm going to offer three positions that set forth my understanding of the chapter.

**Mark 13 isn't talking about the end of the world.** That's the conclusion many jump to after reading language like, "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (v 26). To think "the Son of Man coming in the clouds" can *only* refer to the Lord's second coming is to ignore the plethora of prophetic passages where similar language is used to describe historical judgments. (See Matt. 26.64, Isa. 19.1, Jer. 4.13, Dan. 7.13, Mic. 1.3). Context always determines the meaning of a term, and Christ's topic sentence in Mark 13.2 identifies the Temple—not the world—as the target of His judgment. Parallel texts in other Gospels confirm this (Lk. 21.20,24). Jerusalem/Jews, not the world, is the subject of Mark 13.

**Historical "comings" of God occur when He intervenes in history to judge corrupt governments and nations.** Government is a divine institution (Rom. 13.1) that exists to punish the evil and praise the good (1 Pet. 2.14). But when governments go bad and past the point of no-return, God steps in and pulls the plug (Mic.1.2). He did this to Assyria (Nahum), Babylon (Isa. 14), the Philistines (Isa. 14.28–31), Moab (Isa. 15–16), Persia and Greece (Daniel), Israel (Amos 3–9). In Mark 13, Jesus speaks of God's judgment on Judah, which would happen with the lifetimes of some who heard Him speak (Matt. 24.34). The nation that killed God's Son would be miserably destroyed (Matt. 21.41).

I believe Revelation foretells the judgment of Rome (see also Dan. 8.23–25). Although we have no specific prophetic word about it, I believe God continues to providentially judge governments and nations that go off the rails.

**Apocalyptic language was often used by God to describe His historical judgments.** Apocalyptic literature is figurative/symbolic literature that alerts readers to what's coming and comforts them regarding any distress they might encounter. By such language, Christ assures His people that God has not deserted them and that the time of distress will offer opportunities for them to tell of Christ to people they otherwise would never have met. Even in judgment, there's mercy.

kenny

## *Herodian Masada, 11*

Atop Masada the Jews did everything they could think of to harass and interfere with the Romans. Although Josephus does not provide details for the siege of Masada like he did for Jotapata, there is one thing we know for certain: whereas Jotapata fell to the Romans in approximately seven weeks, the Zealots on Masada held out for seven months, from the fall of AD 72 to the spring of 73.

Josephus does not detail a single counterattack the Jews made during this time. What he does say is that at the top of their earthen ramp, the Romans erected a ninety-foot tall tower that was covered with iron plates. From the top the tower, arrows and stones could be launched with deadly accuracy against the Jewish defenders on the wall of the citadel, forcing them to keep their heads down. "At the same time Silva ordered that great battering ram which he had made to be brought thither, and to be set against the wall, and to make frequent batteries against it, which with some difficulty broke down a part of the wall, and quite overthrew it" (*Wars* 7.8.5). The Jews, however, had anticipated that the wooden walls built by Herod wouldn't stand up to the Roman assault, so behind Herod's walls they had built a double wall of wooden beams with earth filling the space between. The dirt absorbed the force of the battering ram. According to Josephus, the pounding against the earthen wall only served to compact the dirt more closely, thus making the wall even stronger.

Silva had to finally admit his battering ram was useless against this wall. Changing tactics, he ordered that burned torches be hurled against the wooden portions of the wall. This was done and the wood caught fire. But when the wind suddenly changed direction, the fire was directed against the Roman siege tower, threatening to burn it down. But then the wind changed again, driving the fire against the Jewish wall, which was soon in flame.

The Romans thanked the gods for this, returned to their camp with joy, and prepared to take Masada the next day.

kenny

### *News about us*

- Larry has been in the Gibson hospital the past two nights waiting for a twisted colon to untwist itself. Keep him in your prayers.