

## THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

Mark 13:24-37

In 1985, a NASA engineer named Roger Boisjoly observed that the O-ring seals on a space shuttle's solid rocket boosters (SRB) might fail under cold temperature conditions. After testing the seals, Roger wrote a memo that said this: "*It is my honest and very real fear that if we do not take immediate action to dedicate a team to solve the problem...then we stand in jeopardy of losing a flight...*" In January of 1986, with the space shuttle "Challenger" set to launch on a cold launch day, Roger was still voicing his concerns but the decision was made to launch anyway. Just 73 seconds into its flight, the space shuttle Challenger broke apart, and the flight vehicle carry 7 astronauts exploded. Because the warnings of Boisjoly were ignored, there resulted one of the greatest disasters in space program history.

What we're looking at today in our next passage through the Gospel of Mark is not dissimilar in that Jesus Christ says He is coming again and to ignore His warning to be ready to meet Him would be disastrous. If Jesus Christ who He says He is and He is coming back like He said, then there is there anything more important than trusting Him as Savior and living for Him and eternity? If the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ is true, it has eternal ramifications for our lives.

As I was thinking about putting together the sermon, I thought this really is a great passage for mothers and graduates because as a Christian mother, your greatest joy and desire and ministry should be to see your children come to know Jesus and walk in the truth because you know how there is nothing more important in their lives (3 John 1:4). You want them living in light of eternal life in Christ – not just the temporal.

And to the graduates, I hope you've received your mother's instruction to live for Christ because you are being thrust into the world and will be making your own decisions soon. It's like my friend Jaclyn reminded me, for example, that the first Sunday away from home is coming and you're going to have to decide, "*Am I going to get out of bed and go to church, or not?*" It's all you now. Your parents' faith must become your own. You have to develop your own relationship with the Lord and seek His direction for *your* life. What matters is that you know Jesus and you're living for Him because you will answer to Him someday. Jesus is coming back, and His reward is with Him.

That's sort of what we're going to talk about today. Christ is returning and that comes with life-changing ramifications. So far in Mark 13's Olivet Discourse, we've looked at the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the tribulation, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> half known as the Great Tribulation, and now Christ's return in Mark 13:24-37.

*"But in those days, after the tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together the elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven."*

*Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Even so, you too, when you see these things happening recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.*

*Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Therefore, be on the alert – for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning – in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you I say to all, “Be on the alert!”*

Alright, so the first thing we see in **verses 24-27** a brief description of Jesus' coming again. 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

### I. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN. (VV. 24-27)

And Mark's version of the Olivet Discourse is quite brief in comparison to Matthew's telling of it. But remember that Mark is a book action and activity written for easily distracted Americans – I mean, Romans (j/k). Mark is about *a Servant Savior on the move* written Roman style to Roman believers enduring persecution. And this discourse on the brutality of the tribulation ought to help them with what they're going through. It will remind them that this world is not their home, they're strangers and pilgrims living in enemy territory, that following Christ can cost you dearly, and that Christ is coming as King to be King and will take back enemy territory, judging His enemies.

And Mark moves quickly through this, not going into a whole lot of detail. But that's alright because prophecy is not just there to satisfy our curiosity with all the details. It's there to make an impact on our lives – to produce **readiness** and **hope** and **joy** and **purity** and **patience** and **perseverance**. And that's why it's important to understand Christ is coming back – it should change your life! Change the *way* you live, *what* you live for, and *who* you live for. Everything.

#### ❖ Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming should change how we live and what we live for.

Some of you have probably seen the movie *Secondhand Lions*. Well, there's this scene at the end where the old crazy man flies his plane upside-down through the barn and let's just say he doesn't make it. But a couple of guys who knew him well said, "*He lived. He really lived.*" They're saying the man didn't just exist, but he lived life to the fullest. Well, as my friend Wayne Fisher says, "*If you want to live – I mean really live – you need Jesus.*" To live life to the fullest you need Jesus to live and then live in light of His coming, eternal kingdom. Abundant life is found in Christ.

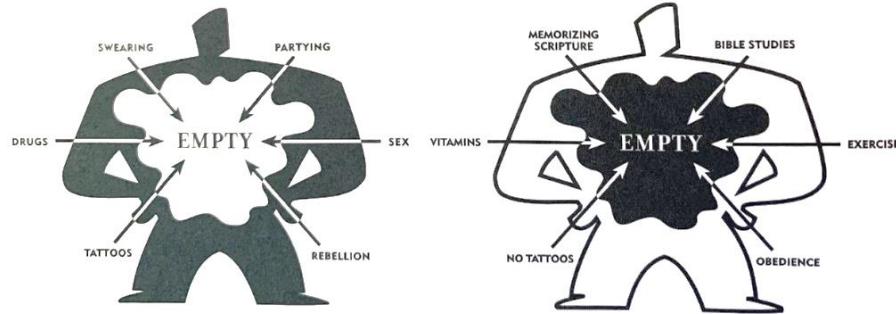
#### ❖ Jesus = Life. (*Christ is life!* in the words of Scott Mathis)

This is way Jesus describes Himself, like the men's fellowship group studied on Friday morning. We all hunger and thirst at times and that is only representative of our spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst that only Jesus can satisfy. He is the **Living Water** and the **Bread of Life** that can satisfy your soul's longing for more in this life. But what's sad is that many misread their spiritual hunger and thirst for Jesus and try to satisfy their hunger and thirst with all sorts of things other than Christ.

Why is that? I mean, theologically speaking, when Adam and Eve sinned against God in the garden, **they died spiritually** (and would die physically). And as their offspring, we're all born spiritually dead too. That's why Jesus said **we must be born again** (Jn. 3:3). We all have this void in us where the Spirit of God should be, the way we were created to be. So it's like a vacuum that also wants to be filled. We're not whole until we place our faith in Christ and are born again at that moment by the Spirit because only the Spirit was meant to fill it this void.

But what many do, and I don't want to pick on you guys, but especially what young graduates fresh out of high school or college when they start to make their own decisions, like I did, is they start to live to fill that void by chasing things other than Jesus and the vacuum is never satisfied. It leads to

confusion and chaos and depression in their lives, and at the end of their life looking back, a deep unsatisfaction. And those things we live for can be positive or negative things.



One might live for drugs, alcohol, possessions, money... any cravings. And one might live for things that aren't inherently wrong like education, adventure, exercise, body building, notoriety of any kind – secular or Christian. But here's the thing: without Jesus, no amount of any of those things is going to bring you life – spiritual, *eternal life – ainios zoe* life. Life that is spiritual life, here and now, and lasts throughout eternity. It doesn't just start when you die but now, Jesus is the Bread of Life that feeds your hungry soul. He's the Water of Life that if you drink of will make you not thirst again. He is a well, welling up more and more unto eternal glory.

You've got to understand this because **unless you understand your basic problem according to biblical anthropology, biblical truth, you'll never find the solution.** You'll just keep misdiagnosing and mistreating the problem. Many think that like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, that a bunch of religious activity and behavioral correction can even bring life. But life is only found in by faith in Jesus Christ. It's like J. Vernon McGee said, "*What a waste to attempt changing behavior without truly understanding the driving needs that cause such behavior!*" Man needs to be born again life – a correct belief system is more important than correct behavior. Trusting Christ alone as your Savior is the first step to living in light of His return.

I really want to encourage our graduates and young people this morning to trust Christ and seek Him and live for Him because there's a lot of folks who don't and they get to the end of their life and they have regrets or they try to make all their peace at once. Learn from them.

But let's get into the passage more, taking notice of some descriptives about Christ's coming.

**1. There will be great cosmic disturbances.** (vv. 24-25; Rev. 6:12-13; 8:12; Joel 3:2, 9-15)

We've discussed this a bit already in this discourse. There will be cosmic disturbance during the 6<sup>th</sup> seal and at least during the 4<sup>th</sup> trumpet (Rev. 8:12) as well, but the actual day that Jesus returns, cosmic convulsions come to a climax. The sun is darkened, the moon darkened, stars are falling, the heavens are shaking and splitting apart. It's something predicted throughout the OT prophets and Jesus is quoting some of them together as He describes His coming (Isa. 13:10; 24:23; 34:4; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15; Amos 8:9).

And what's interesting is that during the cosmic disturbances of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal in the 1<sup>st</sup> half, men are shaking and afraid and hiding. And many will do the same when He comes – many will be fainting from fear because of the things they're seeing and the expectation of things that are coming upon the world (Lk. 21:25-26). There is, however, by the end of the tribulation period, many men who do not hide! Rather, they assemble together in battle array and boldly attempt to war against Israel and prevent Jesus from coming to reign (Ps. 2:1-3; Joel 3:9-16; Zech. 12:2-

9; 14:1-6, 12-14). And where do they get their audacity? They get it from the Anti-Christ and false prophet's miraculous powers. So great are the miracles and signs that the Anti-Christ and his sidekick are performing, they deceive much of the world into thinking no one can stand against them, not even God (Rev. 13:4; 16:14)! They say things like, "*Who is like the beast and who can wage war against him?*" and gather many men for war. Of course, we know according to passages like Zechariah 14, 2 Thessalonians 1 & 2, and Revelation 19, that Christ will come and effortlessly slay them with the breath of His mouth because He is God.

## **2. Jesus will come in the clouds with power and glory. (v. 26; Rev. 19)**

As one man said, "*Jesus will no longer appear primarily as the Suffering Servant, but as the glorified "Son of Man"—"coming with great power and glory"!*"<sup>1</sup> When he ascended, Acts 1 says ta cloud received Jesus out of the apostles' sight and the angles there said He's coming back in the same way as they watched Him go (Acts 1:11). Revelation 19 is a key text, unveiling this most spectacular event.

*And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many crowns; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written: "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."*

*Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great feast of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, both free and slaves, and small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

So when He comes back, it is going to be a massive, glorious display of His power.

### **❖ His coming is a literal, physical return to be seen by the world.**

He came like a Lamb the first time, riding on a donkey's colt. The second time He comes as a Lion, on a war horse with a sword satiated in blood, His garments stained with the blood of His enemies, trodding down in anger those who stand against Him (Isaiah 63:1-6). He comes as a Judge, bringing swift justice. Then He'll send forth His angels it says to gather His people Israel who've been scattered due to judgment and harassment by Anti-Christ.

## **3. Angels will gather to Jesus Israel and the surviving tribulation saints. (v. 27)**

And I'm one who thinks, again, in light of the context that if you just let this word elect refer to Israel, then it works great and is a fulfillment of prophecy. Remember this Discourse is answering the question, "What's going to happen to Israel now that they've rejected Christ at His first coming?" They'll be judged and scattered, AD 70, but also through the tribulation period a believing remnant will receive Him at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. This "generation" of the Jews

will be gathered under His wings like He wanted (Matt. 23:36-38). Remember when He said that just before beginning this discourse in Matthew? It's a fulfillment of OT prophecy like Deuteronomy 30:1-4 where God will have compassion on repentant Israel and gather them from all nations where they've been scattered as outcasts. "*If your outcasts at the end of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.*" (Dt. 30:3-6; Isa. 11:12, 59:20-21; Jer. 31:7-9; Ezek. 11:16-17; 20:33-44; 37:1-14; Joel 3:2; Zech. 12:9-31:1; 14:4-11; Romans 11; Matthew 25).

But it's not only Israel that will be gathered. There is a lot of other things going on not mentioned like the resurrection of martyred tribulation saints (Rev. 20:4) and even the unbelievers will be gathered. Remember Christ's parable about angels coming to gather the tares before the wheat is harvested? All the nations left will be gathered to Him for the Matthew 25 judgment of sheep and goats, sheep entering the kingdom, but He takes special note of Israel.

But kind of switching gears here, right before He ascended, the disciples were still curious about when He would come and establish His kingdom. They asked, "*Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?*" And He didn't deny it wasn't coming. He just said, "*It is not for you to know the time or epochs by which the Father has fixed by His own authority.*" But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:7-8). So it's like He doesn't want them so wrapped up in the coming kingdom age that they neglect the responsibilities of the present Church age<sup>ii</sup> to which they've been entrusted. Well we have a couple of **parabolic lessons** at the end of Mark's Olivet Discourse that keep us from neglecting our responsibilities as well: one about *knowing* and one about *not knowing*.

## **II. THE FIG TREE LESSON: BE WATCHFUL. (VV. 28-32)**

Just like when a fig tree becomes tender in the spring and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near, so in the same way, when you see these things happening described in **verses 6-25**, you know His coming is near – right at the door. So what He is saying is that those in the Tribulation need to be in the Word and be watchful. In the Word because the instructions are there for living through this period that is going to occur without a doubt. Why without a doubt. Because He is God and His words will come to pass. He is affirming prophecy spoken of here. You can count on it. Just as His prophecy of AD 70 came to pass, so will the tribulation period. He goes so far to say....

### **❖ Jesus' words will outlast heaven and earth. (v. 31)**

They're eternal. I mean, in reality, the ultimate hope of the gospel is the New Heaven and New Earth and New Jerusalem describes in Revelation 21-22. That's why when you understand the Bible, the environmentalists push to protect the environment from impending carbon footprint doom is almost laughable. We want to take care of the environment, but the future of this world is determined. Christ will come back before it ends. It won't end in nuclear warfare or global warming or by a stray asteroid. Christ is coming back before the earth, or Israel, or humanity passes away.

Because of chapter 11:12-14, where Jesus cursed the fig tree that represented Israel, combined with all the OT passages about Israel described as a fig tree (Is. 5:1-7), many think the fig tree becoming tender and coming to life could represent Israel. Honestly, I think it could based on the context. But even if it doesn't, and only refers to the signs in vv. 6-25, to me *recognizing the rebirth of the nation of Israel is being watchful in our age since they had to be a nation for the Olivet Discourse to be fulfilled.* There must be a Jewish nation regathered and a temple for the Anti-Christ to set himself up in and their birth as a nation in 1948, having been scattered since AD 70 should tell us something... be ready! That's what we look at lastly.

Even though we can be watchful, and those in the tribulation can have a certain measure of proximity as to when Christ will return (3 ½ years after the abomination of desolation is revealed), no one knows the exact moment. So we go from *knowing* to *not knowing*.

### **III. THE LESSON OF THE DOORKEEPER: BE READY. (VV. 33-37)**

The exhortations is to be ready. “*Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come.*” He likens it to a man who goes away on a journey and leaves his house in charge of his slaves, assigning to each one his task. Those slaves have no idea when the master is returning *exactly*. They might know that He’ll be back in a couple of weeks or months or years but not the exact day or hour.

It’s kind of like when you were a teenager, and your parents went out on a date night or out of town for the weekend, and you’d ask them, “*When are you guys coming back?*” and they say, “*We don’t know.*” Did your parents ever do that to you? They do that to keep you on your toes and so you keep the house in order. You know the approximate time of the return, but didn’t know the exact time. When Christ comes, it’s like hide and seek. If you can hear the person counting you know approximately when they will come but when they do, it’s “*Ready or not, here I come!*”

In **verse 32** even Jesus said when He was here in His **humanity**, He didn’t know the day or hour He said. That doesn’t mean He wasn’t God or that He wasn’t omniscient, but that He didn’t take advantage of omniscience at every opportunity but only drew on it as the Father’s will for Him to do so. He was fully God, but He was fully human as well and this affirms His humanity which is just as necessary as His divinity. It’s not a lack of divine capacity, but divine capacity intentionally restrained. He’s the Son of God and **Son of Man** who is to come (Dan. 7:13-14).

But that being said, we’re all just left on our toes waiting, aren’t we? We’re not to listen to date-setters and predictors. But we’re to be on the alert at all times, even the Church living today waiting on an imminent rapture. I think that’s why He says in verse 37, “*What I say to you, I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’*” We’re all left in the same position with His coming for us just hanging overhead. If all the prophetic details have given you a mental charley horse, just **keep it simple – here’s your responsibility: 1) be ready and 2) be watchful.** That sums up so much prophetic application.

But let’s focus on “Be ready!” and ask the question:

**If Jesus Christ came back today, even right now, would you be ready?  
Or would you be asleep spiritually?**

Jesus wants us to heed the warning to be alive spiritually when He comes. “*The opposite of watchfulness is insensibility, lethargy, and inactivity—pictured here as sleep (cf. Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:1-11).*”<sup>iii</sup> You don’t want to be sleeping spiritually.

❖ **Be ready can be an exhortation to unbelievers to trust Christ as Savior.**

You want to be in faith when He returns. What I mean by that is that He died for your sins and it’s only by faith in Him that you’ll be saved from God’s wrath. The reason He hasn’t come back already is because He is patient, “*not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*” (**2 Peter 3:9**). And I’m just going to tell you what the Bible says. In the end, Revelation 19 records two suppers: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and the Great Supper of God. In one, you attend the supper and one you are the supper (for the birds).<sup>iv</sup> It’s the most important decision you can make today to be ready.

❖ Be ready is also an exhortation to *believers* to be abiding in Christ when He returns.

Abiding comes from John 15 and means we are keeping His commands, walking in fellowship with Him. We are living expectantly and obediently, like slaves who are fulfilling the tasks He entrusted to us. We're vigilant and active. We are sacrificially serving Christ, investing our lives wisely by living for Him. We are looking to redemption and reward, sharing the gospel, exercising our gifts, etc.

The doorkeeper that is ready will be rewarded with a crown (Rev. 3:10-11) but the one who isn't will be ashamed. **1 John 2:28**, a prodding verse I memorized years ago, says, “Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away in shame at His coming...” He continues in verse 3:2-3, “We know that when He appears we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

You know, if those NASA engineers could go back and fix those O-rings, do you think they would? Absolutely. But can they? No, it's too late. So it is when we enter eternity. By the time we get there, it's too late to go back and do things differently (Luke 16:19-31). So let's live for Christ now. Let's be ready at all times. And let's bring back that ancient Christian passphrase, “*Maranatha! Our Lord, come!*”

<sup>i</sup> Thomas Constable, *Constables Notes*, <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf>, notes accessed 6 May 2021, 274.

<sup>ii</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: NT* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 127.

<sup>iii</sup> Constable, 278.

<sup>iv</sup> Erwin Lutzer, *The King is Coming* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 144.