

## Mark 13:24-37

### “Stay Awake!”

This morning we come to this final passage in Mark Ch 13 that deals with end times prophecy. Where we find Jesus instructing His disciples concerning what they should expect, and what they'll see in the last days just prior to His return. In the 1<sup>st</sup> portion of this Ch Jesus tells them what the sign *will not* be, it will not be wars or rumors of wars, it will not be nations against nations, kingdoms against kingdoms, famines and earthquakes (natural disasters) in various places. That is simply life on planet earth apart from Jesus Christ. When you reject the Prince of Peace it's impossible to obtain or walk in the reality *of* true peace. Now He did tell us that we can expect those things to happen more frequently and with a greater intensity as the end approaches, like birth pangs signaling the end of one era and the beginning of another on the horizon.

Beginning in Vs 14 Jesus told His disciples what the sign *will be specifically* that will signal to them with out any shadow of doubt that they're there, that they're with in 3 ½ yrs of His return. and It's what the bible refers to in the book of Daniel as the “abomination of desolation,” when the antichrist will come into the temple (that's yet to be rebuilt) show himself that he is God, and demand that he be worshiped as God. Jesus said, “When you see that, run for your life! Don't clock out at work, don't pack your bags or grab your jacket on the way out of the door at home, just flee! Because there is about to be persecution brought upon the believers in that day with such ferocity that the earth has never seen days that dark nor will ever see them again.” and If you weren't here last week I'd encourage you to grab a copy of that study to catch perhaps a bit of the magnitude of that statement. Jesus said that it would be so bad that if God didn't intervene, if He were to just let things follow their natural progressive path that there would no flesh saved, that mankind would literally exterminate himself from off the planet.

Now, I want to back up briefly here and mention something (really just for the sake of saying it though I believe it's appropriate at this point). Because we mentioned last week that it would seem undoubtedly that part of the peace agreement that the A.C. makes with the nation of Israel will be to allow them to rebuild their temple and reinitiate the daily sacrifices. (Of course we know that 3 ½ yrs into it he'll break the contract and bring an end to the sacrifices saying that he himself is God.) and As believers when we hear of the fact that there are blueprints for the temple even as we speak, that they are prepared with all the sacrificial instruments and vessels of the ministry to re-inaugurate the Levitical order of priesthood, there's a part of us that gets excited. Because we're seeing scriptures fulfilled in our lifetime that point to the soon return of Jesus Christ for His church. Yet at the same time it seems to me that we should have mixed emotions about the temple being rebuilt. Not because we want to stand in the way of God's word, it's thrilling to see it come to pass. But because we realize that the *reason* they want to build the temple is so that they can reinstate the order of sacrifice, because they want there to be the shedding of blood for the remission of their sin, they're looking for atonement. and That my friends denies the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross. It says that the sacrifice of Christ was insufficient for my sins I need to sacrifice these

animals. Listen, the sacrifice of Christ is more than sufficient to make atonement, to provide the forgiveness of your sins. All the animal sacrifices did was to provide a foreshadow of the sacrifice *fulfilled* in Christ. So as for being excited about bible prophecy, hey, that's only appropriate. But we realize that Jesus was God's sacrifice for the sin of the world, not the blood of bulls and goats.

Ok; we've learned what the sign *is not*, what the sign *will be* (of course we know the church will be gone when that takes place, it's Israel that Jesus is speaking to concerning this, again you'll have to grab the last couple studies if you're interested, I can't repeat it right now) and now Jesus shares how it all winds down and wraps up.

### Vs 24-25

Jesus says, "But in *those days*" in what days? The last days, note "after that tribulation" after this time known as the abomination of desolation, after the days of destruction and devastation unparalleled in human history; (here's what's going to happen) the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. So far throughout Mark 13 we've been speaking of destruction and devastation on a *terrestrial* level, here Jesus points out that things of a similar nature will be taking place on a *celestial* level. and Again you should know that He's not saying something that's fresh off the press here, the word of God had declared these things centuries before Jesus walked the earth. Remember the exhortation of Vs 14? "Let the reader understand." We are to read God's word and take the necessary means to get a grip on God's word lest we be deceived and/or caught off guard.

Isaiah tells us, "*Behold, the day of the Lord comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. 'I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the Lord of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger.'*" Isa 13:9-13 Joel 2:30-31 "*And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.*"

and Though I'm stopping with these 2 references understand the word of God is replete with warnings of His judgment. We're to *know* the word of God and respond appropriately *to* the word of God.

Jesus tells us here that the period of Great tribulation immediately preceding His return will climax, or crescendo with the manifestation of terrifying signs in the heavens and worldwide chaos on the earth. In Luke's gospel we read where Jesus said, "*And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*" Luke 21:25-26 Did you catch that, "Men's hearts failing them from fear," people slipping into cardiac arrest because they're so absolutely terrified. and In the book of Rev we

read that they'll understand that it's God's judgment yet they'll refuse to repent. Isn't that amazing, the absolute resolve in the heart of man against God...tragic. Yet these signs (predicted by the prophets) will prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth.

## Vs26

We mentioned last week that the darkest hour is just before the dawn, yet when that ray of light shines through it's a beautiful thing. There's a reason that when you go (if you should go) and shop for diamonds the jeweler will take that diamond and lay it over a black velvet cloth. He/she won't place it over a lighted glass, or a white satin sheet, he'll place it over black velvet, because it's against the blackness that its splendor is really set off. Its glory will radiate against the darkness. Even so when Christ comes again His glory will burst forth from the darkness, and for some it will be a beautiful things, for others their worst nightmare will have come true.

Because for those who've rejected Jesus Christ all the tribulation, all the devastation has only been a teaser trailer, it only gets worse from that point and not in a temporal way, but in an eternal way. People will go from an environment whereby hell has been literally breaking loose on earth, to being cast literally into hell. All of the horrendous events will have only been a foreshadowing of what will be fulfilled, what will be their lot forever. That's why we can never over emphasize the urgency regarding the need to give your life to Jesus Christ Because it's not a game, or some mythological type fantasy that people have become delusional over. It's a matter of eternal life or death and you only get one shot at it; your resolve in this life will determine what happens to your life in eternity.

and The need for urgency is only underscored when we realize that we never know when our soul will be required of us, it could be when we're little old men and women who fall asleep and never wake up. Or it could be later today in a tragic accident, or violent crime (God forbid). and That's why it's so important that we not delay but that we surrender we heart to Christ because it's not God's desire that *any* should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Yet God will deal with unrighteousness and He *will* judge sin. But so often people willfully choose condemnation over salvation through the rejection of Jesus Christ God doesn't condemn anyone, people condemn themselves because they reject Jesus Christ whom God has provided as the means of our salvation.

But as we read Vs 26 perhaps you realize now why Jesus said back in Vs 21-22 (read). He says that in these days deceivers will arise claiming to be the Christ that are so convincing (due to the legitimate miraculous signs and wonders they'll be performing through satanic means) that the temptation will be there to believe them (and millions will). But Jesus says, "Don't *you* believe it." Why? Because when He returns *they will see Him coming in the clouds with great power and glory*. Who are "they?" Those who are upon the earth at that time; the bible says, "*Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*" Rev 1:7 and We've talked about these "clouds" before that He comes with. Don't think that they're cumulonimbus; we're talking here about the Shekinah, the glory of God, the same cloud that engulfed them on the Mt of transfiguration, that overshadowed Mary so that she conceived, that received Jesus out of the sight of the disciples at His ascension. He will come with great power, and *glory*. You won't need to catch the highlights at 10 on the evening news. Jesus said, "*For*

*as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” Matt 24:27* People are going to know when Jesus is physically on the scene. Daniel, in describing this said, *“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.” Dan 7:13-14* When Jesus came the 1<sup>st</sup> time it was in relative obscurity with meekness, the 2<sup>nd</sup> time Jesus comes will be with great power and glory; all peoples, nations and languages will serve Him.

### **Vs27**

Now don't be confused here, this is not a reference to the rapture. The bible is clear that at the rapture Jesus won't send out His angels to gather us together. But rather we will be called up to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17); this is the gathering of the nation of Israel prior to the millennial kingdom, pointing ultimately (I believe) to the fulfillment of the covenant (Duet 30:4-6, Isa 65:9-10 etc).

### **Vs 28-29**

Jesus points to the signs in nature and says that when you see certain things, it communicates a certain message. When the tree begins to blossom spring (or in the case of the fig tree, late spring) is upon you and summer is close at hand. When the trees begin to leaf summer is around the corner, those signs send that message. Even so Jesus says when you see these things, these signs, (abomination of desolation, cosmic catastrophes and cataclysmic upheavals, persecution unparalleled and life being snuffed out on a global level) they're sending you a certain message; that the return of Christ is near, at the very doors.

Now because Jesus points to a fig tree, and the fig tree in scripture generally typifies or speaks of the nation of Israel there are those who will say that when Jesus said, “learn this parable from the fig tree” and spoke of it's branches coming into bloom that He spoke of the re-budding of the nation that took place in 1948 and that that was a specific sign that meant we were on the brink of all these things coming down. and Because Jesus said what we read in Vs 30...

### **Vs30**

People say we must be the generation that will see these things take place because we seen the fig tree blossom in 1948. and In the bible you can find support for a generation being 40 yrs, 70 yrs, or even 100 yrs. Those in this category will say that Jesus will return sometime most probably before 2048 because His return will be with in the generation that seen Israel become a nation. If that's your perspective you are in some outstanding company.

Personally (though I understand that and have perhaps even taught that) I'm not as persuaded at this point that that's what Jesus was saying. Though you can create a beautiful case for it and do so in biblical fashion (just like you can sovereignty, election, freewill and all the rest). One of the reasons I'm not so sure that Jesus is pointing exclusively to Israel on this one is because we read in Luke's account of this same passage that Jesus said, *“Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.” Luke 21:29* Which to say that Jesus wasn't making an isolated statement concerning the fig tree exclusively (pointing to the nation of Israel specifically) He was making

a statement generally showing how certain signs point to a coming reality. (Like birth pangs in a woman, they're signs pointing to a coming reality).

So I'm of the persuasion that Jesus was simply saying, "Hey, when you see these signs, just like the blooming of the leaves on trees point to summer, these things point to My soon return, behold I come quickly!"

Who then is "this generation" that won't pass away? Well, we know it wasn't those disciples that were there that day, He wasn't speaking concerning them. Because they've all passed away, I believe it was a simple statement to encourage those tribulation saints that there's hope. It won't go on forever this way; as a matter of fact the generation that sees it begin will see it end. You can even # the days from the abomination of desolation. Daniel tells us *"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days."* Dan 12:11 Doesn't get a whole lot clearer than that.

### **Vs31**

In other words, "I'm telling you these things and you can take it to the bank, it's a check that's going to cash guaranteed." Heaven and earth (as awesome as they are in scope and magnitude) will pass away, will perish, but My word will never perish, its eternal in nature. Now listen, if that's not an amazing claim of deity I don't know what is. Think about the implications of that statement. You guys wouldn't give me the time of day (and justifiably so) if I stood before you and said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will be remembered and make an impact eternally."

You'd laugh me to scorn and say, "Jeff, I can't remember your words 5 minutes after they come out of your mouth!" But that's not true as it pertains to Jesus is it? Thousands of yrs later His words are still in affect and will continue to be throughout eternity. Whose word but the word of God is eternal? The word of Jesus is the word of God, because Jesus is God and as such His words will have eternal validity.

### **Vs32-37**

3x's from Vs 32-37 Jesus says, "no one knows, you don't know, you don't know." It amazes me how many people try to put these things on a time table when Jesus says very plainly, "You don't know, no one knows!" Even Jesus Himself said that He didn't know, it was information privy to the Father exclusively. Now people have wrestled with that, "I thought Jesus was God?" He is, "Then how could He not know?" The bible makes it clear to us that when Jesus became a Man that He willfully withheld from Himself certain rights of divinity. His deity was never compromised, but certain *rights* of His deity He chose to willfully lay aside and subject Himself to the will of the Father. He never utilized the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His own whims, only to fulfill the will of the Father. If the Father wanted Jesus to do something, He obeyed, if He wanted Jesus to know something He knew it, if not Jesus willfully subjected Himself to not knowing in His humanity. His food was to do the will of His Father, not serve His own desire. Now if Jesus (in all of His wisdom and understanding of scripture) didn't try to set dates, why do we?

Now, there are certain things that *we know* when they'll take place because God has revealed them to us. Other things (like when the Great Tribulation will begin) we don't know. We see things that point that direction, but we can't know conclusively; why? Because; what is

it that kicks off the count down? When does the 7 yr period called Great Tribulation begin? At the *rapture of the church*; and as for when *that* happens we just don't know.

and Again you guys, it's not too difficult to determine when the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ will be *after* the rapture of the church. The bible spells those things out pretty clearly, but regarding the rapture it's surrounded by mystery and ambiguity. The rapture of the church and the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ are 2 distinctly different events on the prophetic time table. and God purposefully left ambiguity surrounding the rapture (I'll explain why in a moment), but once the rapture takes place things will spin so violently and brutally out of control that God wanted to bring assurance to those going through that time that Christ would return for them soon so they could count the days and have that hope (that guaranteed certainty).

It's interesting that Jesus spent all this time telling us what we *need* to know, then here at the end of His teaching He tells what we *can't* and will *never* know. Which is when exactly these things will begin; which is predicated upon the rapture. and Jesus told us that when that takes place people will be living life business as usual, being married and given in marriage, eating and drinking and then "Bam!" In the twinkling of an eye we (believers in Jesus Christ) will be changed, caught up to meet with the Lord in the air. and It sounds incredible (unbelievable in fact) yet that's exactly what the bible teaches.

and In Vs 33-37 Jesus is saying that you don't want to get caught off guard, you don't want to be sleeping spiritually (that is backslidden) when He returns, stay awake! Watch, be vigilant, be prayerful, walk intimately *with* Him, stay active *servicing* Him, lest He come in a day and at an hour that you do not expect and He finds you unprepared to stand before Him.

and That's exactly the reason for the ambiguity surrounding His coming for His bride.

Because the nature of man is to shrug off responsibility, and accountability until it's time to settle up then we scramble to make things right. We're procrastinators by nature, and if we knew when the Lord would return we'd live life a little more on the loose side. But just before He came back we'd get dialed in with diligence.

However if we don't know *when* He's coming, and it could literally be at any moment, we're more prone to lead our lives in holiness, leading lives that are pleasing to Him because we don't know but that we might see Him today! and We want to be found so doing what He's committed to our trust at His return. John in speaking about seeing Jesus face to face when He appears said, "*And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*" **1 John 3:3** The thought that I might see Jesus today has a purifying affect on my life. We don't have time to go there but you might jot down Matt 24:45-51 where Jesus speaks on the critical nature of being found faithful at His return.

In this parable before us things are fairly straight forward aren't they? The man who left his house and went to a far country is Jesus. Note it's *His* house, it's not our house, and he gave authority to *his* servants, what we do, we do in His name. and Notice to *each* his work, what God has called you to do isn't exactly what He's called me to do, He's given to each of us our work, we're many members but one body... and He commanded the *doorkeeper* to watch. Now in many respects it seems that the doorkeepers are those whom He has called in a pastoral capacity. I'm here to hold the door for you, to help you in anyway I can, to equip you for the work of the ministry and encourage you to stay faithful and diligent about the work that God's

called you to. To be ready for His “anytime” return lest you grow weary in doing well; Jesus says,

**Vs35-36**

That is “spiritually slothful” “taking a break” from your walk with the Lord, your service to the Lord. He’s not saying you don’t need physical sleep, but rather that we need to be spiritually alert. Because He could come for us at anytime, He mentions every watch of the night here. From 6p to 9p, 9-12 midnight, 12-3a.m. or 3-6a.m. and He’s not saying that He’ll return in one of those time brackets, but simply that it could be anytime, the ambiguity is intentional. But one thing is clear; when He comes He’ll come *suddenly*, there won’t be time to set things in order at that point, you’ll either be ready or you won’t.

So what Jesus said to them, He says to us all, “Watch!”

**Prayer Points:**

Lord we want to be ready for Your return... Do what You need to do in order to ensure that we don’t grow lethargic and slothful spiritually, give that nudge that we need to wake up. So that should You return today, or in 10 yrs we’ll be found faithful, serving You, laboring diligently to the glory of Your name. and If we’ve grown spiritually lazy, or gotten our sights off the urgency with which we’re to lead lives of purity, give us hearts of repentance. For surely You come suddenly, and Lord we want to be ready.

If you’re not ready, you’ve not given your heart to Christ, you’ve withheld your heart from Christ then today is your day. It’s true, horrible things are going to happen, but you can escape all these things by simply being found in Christ. Jesus shed His blood for you, that by believing on Him you might receive the forgiveness of sins. Believe on Jesus today and you’ll leave here brand new, clean, having received the free gift of everlasting life.