

Promises
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Allen Power

Mark 13:24-37

Have you ever become interested in a subject or a skill you wanted to learn but once you began to study it, it got so complicated you just gave up? **Examples?**

Sadly, that's how it is for many followers of Christ when the topic of the "end times" (eschatology) comes up. It's in our Bibles; Jesus Himself talked about it; we know it's important; but you start digging into it and it can become overwhelming.

- In Mark 13, Jesus taught His disciples (and us) about His second coming.
- What does a follower of Christ need to know about His second coming?
- First, we need to know what the Bible says. No debate there.
- Secondly, we need to know what the Holy Spirit reveals about what those texts mean. You learn that through solid teaching and study of solid commentaries so the Spirit can interpret what scripture says.
- This is where we can get off course. We get intrigued, we start studying, then we either get confused or off in the weeds of various schools of interpretation and symbolism, and before you know it we miss the point.
- This is Sunday School and I'm not an expert on eschatology, so I've tried to boil it down to the bottom line of what we need to know about Christ's second coming based on what Jesus said in Mark 13.
- Big Idea Regarding the Second Coming of Christ:
 - The timing is unknown — We need to live expectantly
 - The particulars are uncertain — We need to just trust Him
 - His promise is unequivocal — He will return!
 - His command is undeniable — We need to be ready!

- Mark 13 begins with Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Olives. That's why we call this passage the "Olivet Discourse."
- Jesus intrigued them by saying their beautiful temple would be destroyed.
- Then He discussed signs and events signaling the of the "end of the age," persecutions that would come to His followers, and a "great tribulation."
- Let's read these verses and then unpack their meaning.

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁴ "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

²⁸ "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

No One Knows That Day or Hour

³² "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

- Verse 24: "After the tribulation" - In the prior verses Jesus had described the "Great Tribulation." This will be seven years of horrible, worldwide trouble after the "Antichrist" comes to

power. The Great Tribulation is one of the most controversial issues in studying the “end times.”

- Will those who are saved go through the tribulation or will the “church” be raptured before, during, or after this period of terrible trouble?
- You hear the terms “pre-trib,” “mid-trib,” and “post-trib.” Another school of thought is called “preterism.” It’s the belief that all (or part) of this has already happened when the Romans destroyed the temple and ransacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Studying that is beyond the scope of this lesson.
- My personal belief is that followers of Christ will have been “raptured” before the great tribulation. (1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-53.)
- Even if I’m wrong, I trust Him to take care of His children either way!
- Jesus described incredible changes in nature to indicate His return: “...*the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.*”ⁱ
- Verse 26: He is coming back as the conquering King of all Kings. The whole world will see Him “*coming in clouds with great power and glory.*”
- Verse 27: “...*then he will send out the angels and gather the elect...*”
- All believers (dead or alive) who have been scattered across the world will be gathered to participate in Christ’s triumphant return.
- This also speaks to the nation of Israel. Wiersbe: “*Mark 13:27 describes the regathering of Israel from the nations to which they have been scattered throughout the world (Deut. 30:3–6; Isa. 11:12; Jer. 31:7–9). They will see their Messiah and trust Him*”ⁱⁱ
- If we believe scripture, these verses give us great hope and excitement! Jesus will return as King and those who have trusted Him will be there!
- As we said in the “big idea”: His promise is unequivocal — He will return!
- In verses 28 and 29 Jesus used the example of a fig tree. When the leaves come out you know summer is coming. Jesus

said when we see the signs and events He described, we'll know HE is coming back.

- Verse 30 is another that brings about some controversy. Because Jesus said, *“this generation will not pass away until all these things take place,”* some interpret that as the generation in which He made the statement.
- Swindoll: [Instead] *“It could also refer to the generation alive at the time of the events Jesus described in His prophecy. In that case, “this generation” refers to the Jews who will witness the Great Tribulation of the future. These will see the return of Christ and His ruling as King.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- Verse 31 is one of the great, short, powerful memory verses: *³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.^{iv}*
- **What does that verse say to you about God's word? How might that verse be convicting regarding God's word?**
- In a troubled world we're all looking for something solid we can count on. Jesus assures us that the truth of scripture will forever stand.
- How much time do we waste pursuing trivial things that won't matter next year, next month, next week, while not finding time to be in God's word?
- We said, regarding the Second Coming of Christ: The timing is unknown.
- When Jesus was on earth as both God and man, He had set aside His divine knowledge. He said even He didn't know when He would return.
- If some “end times” expert starts telling you the date when all this will occur, you should RUN not walk to get away from that foolishness!
- Life Application Study Bible: *“No one can predict by Scripture or science the exact day of Jesus' return. Jesus is teaching that preparation, not calculation, is needed.”^v*
- The timing is unknown — We need to live expectantly!
- Verse 33: Jesus also said we need to “be ready!”
- **What should we be doing to “be awake (v.37) and be ready (v.33)” when Jesus comes back? Any thoughts?**

- Step one is to trust Christ as Savior and Lord. If we have done that, then our job is to help others do the same so they too are “ready.”
- Being “awake and ready” doesn’t mean Jesus will only gather those who are displaying good behavior when He returns. We’re saved by grace through faith and NOT good works (Eph. 2:8-9.) We should be reading our Bibles and obeying His commands until He comes in order to be pleasing to Him and be reaching others. (Illustration: My Daddy at the movies)
- Swindoll: *“People who are “on the alert” (Mark 13:33) aren’t simply awake and aware—they have a sense of urgency, not complacency. They stay informed, not ignorant. They are proactive, not passive. Because we don’t know when the Lord will return, we’re always “on the alert.” We keep our hearts and lives pure, our priorities straight, our minds and words holy... He could come at any moment. So we stay alert.”*^{vi}

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- We said, regarding the Second Coming of Christ:
 - The timing is unknown — We need to live expectantly!
 - The particulars are uncertain — We need to just trust Him!
 - His promise is unequivocal — He will return!
 - His command is undeniable — We need to be ready!
- When I think of this my mind goes back to a year ago as we were living “expectantly” anticipating the birth of our grandson Knox.
- We didn’t know the exact day or what the exact circumstances would be, but we knew for sure Knox was coming so we were living EXPECTANTLY.
- We were making preparations, we were speculating on how wonderful it would be, and we were looking at his 4D ultrasound picture on our fridge.
- In the middle of life’s stresses, we would just think about that little man who was coming and immediately it put the hassles of life in their place!
- We didn’t waste time trying to pinpoint the day or hour. And of course, that impending arrival was in the front of our minds every day!

- Imagine how sad it would have been if, when Knox was born, his Mom and Dad had not furnished a nursery, purchased a car seat, or bought diapers! Because they were anticipating and getting ready, it was a glorious arrival.
- That's how all of us should be living in light of Jesus' future return.
- We need to be making preparations: Our own salvation and helping others come to Christ.
- We need to be thinking about Him, spending time with Him, and obeying His word. We need to be doing everything we can so that Jesus finds us alert and ready when He returns.
- The timing is unknown — We need to live expectantly!
- The particulars are uncertain — We need to just trust Him!
- His promise is unequivocal — He will return!
- His command is undeniable — We need to be ready!

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mk 13:24–25). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 157). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Mark (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 2) (p. 333). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

^{iv} [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mk 13:31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^v Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 162837-162840). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

^{vi} Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Mark (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 2) (pp. 334-335). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.