

THE SCROLLS

Meeting The Messiah | Mark 13:28-37

Life Lesson

Jesus' teaching on the end times is meant to produce readiness, not fear or speculation. Because His words are certain and His return is sure, believers are called to live with urgency and faithfulness every day. Watching for Christ does not mean waiting idly; it means actively serving, obeying, and making disciples. True preparedness is being found faithful when He returns, whenever that may be.

Examine Scripture

28 Learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 In the same way, when you see these things happening, recognize that he is near—at the door. 30 “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. 32 “Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—but only the Father. 33 “Watch! Be alert! For you don’t know when the time is coming. 34 “It is like a man on a journey, who left his house, gave authority to his servants, gave each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to be alert. 35 Therefore be alert, since you don’t know when the master of the house is coming—whether in the evening or at midnight or at the crowing of the rooster or early in the morning. 36 Otherwise,

The End Of The World As We Know It (Part 2)

In the midst of pressing toward the cross, Jesus pauses to warn of the coming destruction and tribulation. At first glance, the tone of this chapter is ominous. It is very much a doom-and-gloom message. Jesus warns of the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem itself. Depending on your eschatology, you may see this as a single future event unfolding in the Book of Revelation; this is the Dispensationalist view. Others see it as two events unfolding at different times: one is now past, and one is yet to come. This is the Eclectic view, combining the Preterist and Futurist views of eschatology.

We know that in history, Jerusalem fell and the Temple was destroyed in AD 70. Rome finally had enough of the Jews, and the Roman general Titus came in and utterly destroyed everything. So, Jesus was speaking of a very real destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. However, there will also be a future judgment at His return. So, it is both past and future.

Either way, Jesus warns the people of coming judgment, but for the most part, He was ignored. He was ignored then, and He is ignored even today. It is kind of like being in Walmart when the fire alarm goes off. The lights are flashing, and there is an annoying beeping, but what do all the people do? They keep shopping. That seems to be the attitude of the people, as Jesus warns them. They hear the warning but ignore it. This leads to consequences that are both incredible and frightening. Our text reminds us of the importance of listening to Jesus' warnings and watching for His return.

Vs. 28-32

Jesus returns to the familiar tree known throughout Palestine and a common teaching illustration: the fig tree. The fig tree was one of the few deciduous trees in this region. The Mount of

when he comes suddenly he might find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Be alert!

- Underline “learn this lesson” in (v. 28).
- Circle “he is near” in (v. 29) and write “abomination of desolation.”
- Circle “truly” and “my word will never pass away” in (vs. 30-31). Write “authority of Christ” in the margin.
- Bracket “you don’t know when the time is coming” in (v. 33) and “you don’t know when the master of the house is coming” in (v. 35). Write “Am I ready?” in the margin.
- Underline the various “wait,” “watch,” and “be alert” in (vs. 33-37).

Personal Notes

Olive was not only known for its olive trees but also for its fig trees. When these fig trees began to sprout leaves in the spring, it served as a reminder that summer was soon approaching. It serves as both a sign of hope and a warning.

Jesus’ use of the fig tree is more of a simile than a parable; however, it does recall His parabolic teaching in (Mark 11:12-14; 20-26). In (Mark 11), Jesus used the parable of the fig tree to prophesy the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Here, though Mark’s intention is unknown or at least debated, it seems that he wants his audience to connect the fig tree from (Mark 11) to the one in (Mark 13). This helps interpret what Jesus means when He says, “As soon as its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, recognize that he is near—at the door” (vs. 28-29).

There are two possibilities of what Jesus is referring to. He may be referring to the literal destruction of Jerusalem and the temple or to the appearance of the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:4). To further complicate the interpretation, the phrase “he is near” can also be translated as “it is near.” So, the question is whether Jesus is referring to a specific person or simply to the end of time. When connecting Mark 11 and Mark 13, it seems that Jesus is referring to the “abomination of desolation” as the literal destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Yet, as we studied last week, Mark 13 contains the element of “sensus plenior” (a deeper meaning to this prophecy). It has a “now, not yet” tension. The “now” would have been the desecration of the temple in 167 B.C. and the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. However, the future fulfillment (the “not yet”) is the coming of the “man of lawlessness.” This event has yet to happen and will clearly be the beginning of the end. So, is Jesus referring to the “now” or the future? Both. Mark’s audience would have understood it as the literal destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, but, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the “sensus plenior,” we are given a prophecy of a future event as well.

Just as the fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple assures us of the fulfillment of the “sensus plenior” and the beginning of the end times. Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place” (v. 30). Depending on your eschatological views, there are different interpretations of “generation.” It can refer to humankind in general, the Jewish people, Christians, and unbelievers. Yet the most hermeneutically sound interpretation is exactly what it says:

Personal Notes

“this generation” referring to Jesus’ contemporaries. Elsewhere in Mark, “generations” is interpreted in this sense. It also lends itself to a more practical interpretation, referring to the people who would still be alive to see the literal destruction of Jerusalem. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the waiting for Jesus’ return, the end times are always “at the door” (v. 29).

Notice the authoritative nature of Jesus’ words, “Truly, I tell you” (v. 30). To add emphasis, Jesus adds, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (v. 31). Jesus’ words will never pass away or fall short. They are more sure than the very fabric of the universe. With the fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem, Mark’s audience and subsequent readers of His Gospel throughout history can trust the words of Jesus and cling to His faithfulness in fulfilling His prophecies and promises.

Vs. 32-37

Now, we come to the true question that all of us want to know the answer to, and what man has been asking since the resurrection of Christ: when is Jesus coming back? When will the world end? Here is Jesus’ answer: “Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—but only the Father” (v. 32). These words may not bring much enlightenment or encouragement, but they do bring challenge and warning.

It is interesting to see how many times people have with certainty predicted the end of the world, yet here Jesus says that no one knows the day or hour, neither the angels nor the Son. Before we begin to misunderstand or question the divine attributes of Jesus, we must understand the intention of these words. Jesus is not denying His divinity, but is actually revealing it. First of all, He explicitly refers to Himself as the Son, which is uncommon, especially in Mark. Secondly, Jesus is referring to His humanity. Remember, Jesus is completely God and completely man. In His humanity, Jesus freely laid aside certain aspects of His nature, such as His omnipresence (everywhere at all times). Perhaps, Jesus is demonstrating His humanity by showing a limitation in His earthly knowledge in submission to the Father. Whether Jesus truly didn’t know the day or hour or if He was just emphasizing His humanity and submission to the Father, one thing is clear: He knows the day and hour now. In (Rev. 5), we see that Jesus takes the scroll from the right hand of the Father. The scroll is all of redemptive history, and

Personal Reflection

1. How do I typically respond to Jesus' warnings? Do I truly listen and adjust my life, or have I grown accustomed to hearing without responding?
2. What signs in my own spiritual life indicate whether I am watching expectantly for Christ's return or merely going through the motions of religion?
3. In what ways does Jesus' absolute authority—"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"—shape the trust I place in His promises and commands today?
4. If Jesus were to return today, what unfinished obedience, delayed repentance, or neglected calling would be exposed in my life?
5. How would my daily priorities change if I truly lived as if this were the Last Day rather than merely acknowledging that we are in the Last Days?

Commentaries

Exalting Jesus in Mark by Daniel Akin

MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 9-16 by John MacArthur

BECNT: Mark by Robert Stein

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only Jesus is worthy to open the scroll and usher in the end times, including His return.

Regardless, Jesus makes a very clear point: no one knows when He is returning. So, what do we do in the meantime? We wait and watch! We are not to try to determine when He is returning; we are simply to be ready when He does.

To emphasize being prepared for His return, Jesus gives an illustration of servants who are to be working with anticipation of the master of the house returning. Their watching for the master was not to be used to postpone work until they knew for sure when he would return; they simply didn't know when he would return. So, they were to work every day as if he would return that very day.

In the same way, the ambiguity of the day and hour of Jesus' return ought not to promote laziness or procrastination, but to create in us a sense of urgency. We are to work, serve, worship, and witness every day as if Jesus were returning this very day. In fact, Jesus warns that we ought not be caught "sleeping" (v. 36). We are to stay alert and ready for His return.

When will these things take place? Are they future, past, or concurrent events? When are the Last Days? We may not know the day or hour, or when all things will end, but we can know when the Last Days will begin. You ready? The Last Days began 2,000 years ago when Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. At that moment, the Last Days began. So, are we in the Last Days? Yes! Does this mean Jesus is coming back tomorrow? We simply don't know. But we need to stop preparing for the Last Days and start living as if it is the Last Day! That's the encouragement and challenge Jesus has given us.

Regardless of our eschatology or our interpretation of these events, we must not miss what Jesus is telling us: the end is always closer than we think, and we must be prepared. We can argue and disagree about these third-tier issues, but we cannot compromise our preparedness as we wait for Jesus' return. When Jesus returns, let's be found doing exactly what He has commanded us: making "disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). And cling to His promise: "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Whenever that may be!