



**The Gospel of Mark | Mark 13:24-37**  
**May 24, 2020**

Well, if you'll take a seat, in your home, and open your bible with me to Mark 13, and we're going to begin in verse number 24 today. I want to read to you Mark 13:24 is where we're going to start. "But in those days, after that 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 in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 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. "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. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 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 concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 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. 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—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

Let's pray together. Father, this morning we ask for your grace as we study this text, may it come alive in very rich and dynamic ways. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Well, I have been looking with you at Mark 13 now, for, this is the fourth week, and I've said each week that it's really important that we hold this whole chapter together and I would have much rather had just taught it all in one sitting, but we can't do that because we're not all sitting together for hours on end. And so, we just kind of have to hold all this together. And so, I've reminded you each week that the context of this is Jesus answering the question his disciples have asked back in verse number four, which is when is the temple going to be destroyed? When's that going to happen? And he's been answering that question. And I have kind of just gone really, really slow through this, almost gone from verse by verse preaching to word for word preaching in every one of these verses because I think it's important that we make sense of what's actually going on because I told you there's a lot of ways that we misread this text. And this is the most complicated chapter, along with its parallel passages in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, to interpret in the whole New Testament outside of the Book of Revelation, I think. And so, this is a really complicated place. So, I think it's pastorally responsible for me to slow down and teach you faithfully what Scripture says. You

know my job isn't to check off a task like there's, the task isn't like, get done with the Book of Mark and get out of Mark 13 and then there's a reward. It's, my task is to make sure that you understand clearly what these texts actually mean. So, we're in no hurry, so we're just kind of taking our time. I think one of the reasons this is a really difficult text to get into is because, one, as a society I think as, ah, a church culture in general in America today, we're very biblically illiterate. You know, being illiterate doesn't necessarily mean you can't read words as much as it means you don't understand the meaning of the words that you read. And I think that sometimes, because we don't have a lot of the Bible in our mind, we're not steeped in the Old Testament, most people say, like yeah, I hardly ever read the Old Testament, it's really hard to make sense of everything going on here. So you have to understand that for you to just drop in to Mark 13 with all of these images that it's describing, and think that you're going to just understand it without a lot of rich background with to work with, well, it's like if you went to see the last, the third episode of The Lord of the Rings trilogy. And you just stepped in at the last hour of that three-hour movie, which is really the last hour of the nine-hour trilogy, right? You would be so confused, you'd be asking questions like what, what's an elf? And what's a dwarf? And an Orc? And who's Gandalf and why is the volcano get happ-? I mean, there'd be so many questions you would have. And I think that's really the same thing here is that we just kind of drop in on Mark 13 and we read something and it sounds like the bumper sticker that we saw and we say well, hey, that must mean this and we got to really wrestle with what it actually means.

The other thing I think is, is that we come to this text and we have so many preconceived ideas, not because we're steeped in the Old Testament and we're immersed, and we have so much of that going through us, but because we're steeped in culturalized, popularized Christian teaching that's come from radio teachers or television evangelists. And so, we have all of these ideas before we even get to this. And so, it's really not helpful. And so what happens is you wind up listening to this and rather than actually hearing the words and listening to the full thing, you just start flipping through your Bible and trying to look for all the reasons that you've already been taught that this means this and so it can't mean that. And so, you don't really hear me. You're just mad at me the whole time, and that's not really helpful. So, I want to just slow down this morning again. I want to finish this up and we're going to look at verses 24-37. And I'm going to do my best to be really responsible pastorally and exegetically to the text. And we might disagree on some of this at the end, and that's OK. The thing is, is that you have got to understand, like I'm recognizing, as I teach this that I give an account to Jesus when I stand before him for every word I say. So, I'm really concerned that I handled the text well for that reason, not just because of the opinions of people who may or may not like this because it doesn't match the bumper sticker, right? So, let's look at this text and let me remind you that everything we've seen in verses 1-23 have been about the destruction of the temple. That's been the whole focus. It's not been about predicting end times events, and then we come to this section, and when we get to it, we have to pause for a moment, as I said at the end of last week's message, and we just have to realize how absolutely monumental it was for Jesus to say that the temple was going to be destroyed and then how monumental it was historically and theologically and politically in Israel that the temple was destroyed. I mean, this was earth-shattering. This revolutionized everything. The temple came down in AD 70 and it's never been rebuilt, and this is something that is, in fact, when Jesus is describing the destruction of the temple, this

is probably the most shocking thing that he has said throughout his entire ministry to these disciples. And so, they're hearing this and they're not hearing it the way we hear it like oh, yeah, the temple's been destroyed. They're hearing it like the temple is going to be destroyed?! I mean, it's shocking to them, so if we don't understand how shocking it is, we will get this wrong. So, I think up through verse 23, most evangelical scholars all, unless they hold to a very rare position, would say yes, we understand clearly this is about the destruction of the temple. From verse 24 on, there becomes lots of complicated issues that make, if you put half a dozen evangelical conservative scholars in a room, they might all disagree on various aspects of what happens from this point forward. And so, you know, it just goes to say that when we get to the end of this stuff, we're going to look at this and just realize that there are a lot of very, very bright scholars who are, I mean way, way, way more intelligent, informed than me, and way more intelligent, informed than you who are going to disagree on this. And so, we just have to recognize that sometimes there are just things we just don't agree on when it comes to these sort of secondary matters like eschatology or the study of the end times. This is just not the hill that we need to die on. We need to die on the hill of Jesus has died for our sins because all have fallen short of the glory of God. We need to confess the apostles' creed and recognize that who Jesus is as the Son of God is that the end all be all of all matters for us. What he's done is the end all be all, and he's going to return. And when he returns, I think all six, you know, of us all half a dozen scholars who disagreed on something will stand and look at each other and scratch our heads and say well you got that one right, well, you, you were right on that part, and it'll just be like that. So, we got to just be generous and have charity towards one another, alright? So I want to try to help you see today, uh, this the way that I believe Jesus's disciples would have heard him; as very devout Jewish men who lived in the first century and spent their whole lives memorizing the Old Testament, participating in its festivals, in its rituals, offering sacrifices and burnt offerings and grain offerings at the temple, attending the synagogue; these were people who had a very steep and rich understanding, they had been steeped in like a bag of tea being steeped in water. They were steeped in the Old Testament. They got it, alright? And so, I think we need to pay attention to it in the way that they would have.

So, look with me here at verse number 24, as we begin. It says this, in those days after that tribulation. So, I want you to notice the language here. Look at verse 17, alas, for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days. See that? Now what days is this? This is the days of Jerusalem's destruction. We saw that last week. Look at verse 19, For in those days. What's that? That's the days of Jerusalem's destruction. In those days, there will be such tribulation. What tribulation? The tribulation suffered in Jerusalem, right? As has not been seen from the beginning of the creation that God created until now and never will be. Now look at verse 24, But in those days, so it seems to be the same days, right? It doesn't look like the topics changed. After that tribulation, seems to be the same tribulation. In fact, it's specified with the word 'that.' See that, 'that' tribulation, he's referring to a specific tribulation, and the nearest tribulation that he's referred to has been in verse 19 and verse 17 and the nearest set of days he's referred to has been in verse 17 and verse 19. So, it is very hard for me to assume here that this verse 24 transitions us suddenly to the end of time and the return of Jesus, I have a hard time seeing here something that tells me there's a 2,000 year gap between verse 23 and verse 24. In fact, Matthew's gospel in the parallel account of this, in Chapter 24:29 says this, Immediately after the tribulation of

those days. He puts the word immediately. And just so you know, throughout Matthew's gospel, every time he uses that particular word 'immediately,' it always refers to a straight continuation of events from one thing right to the next. So, it's like I put my child to bed and then I walked in the kitchen. It doesn't mean I put my child to bed, and then 2,000 years later, I went in the kitchen. It just means this happened, this happened. And so, when you look at that, there's nothing here in this language that leads me to believe that Jesus suddenly is speaking about something that has a gap that takes place of 2,000 years between verse 23 and verse 24. Now the problem then becomes this, alright? Look at verse 26. In verse 26 Jesus says, then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds. Now when will they see that? Well look at verse 24, in those days after that tribulation, then, verse 27, they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds. You see how that seems to create a problem? It seems to indicate that everything is being talked about in those days after that tribulation. And then it says that they're going to see the Son of Man coming in the clouds, and you say well wait a minute. What in the world's that about? Well, this is what leads people to have major disagreements about what's going on here, alright? So, if you're a futurist in your interpretation of all of this, then what you might do is you might say, well, look right here. See, this proves that verses 14-23 have nothing to do with the events of the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, and it's all talking about the future, and it's the end times and it's the signs of the times, and so we need to think about that. Now, if you're a liberal right, then here's what you do as a liberal. You just look at you say, well, OK, we don't... liberals, by the way, don't believe in the deity of Jesus. They don't think Jesus was divine. They just see him as a good moral teacher... But they look at this and say, OK, see right there? This proves that Jesus is mistaken. He didn't even have any idea what he was talking about because he thought he was going to return in 70 AD and he didn't. And so, they think he's wrong. Well, the other end of the spectrum is, is those who are called full preterists, and those were people who basic- preterism is just a word that means past and a full preterist is somebody who believes that all prophecy in the Bible has already taken place. That's why it's called preterism, it's the past. It's all taken place. And so, they say, look, see that? That proves that Jesus has already returned. He returned in 70 AD, and it was spiritual, and that's it. And there's no other coming of Jesus that we should look forward to. And so, whether that position or the liberal position is brought forth, I'd say both of those or heretical positions because I don't think that either of those are within the boundaries of Orthodox Christianity.

So how do we make sense then, of this statement that Jesus says about the events taking place in verses 24-27? Alright, well, we got to look at this. We got to do some work, so we're going to have to really dig into this today. Alright? So just stick with me, alright? Stay with the text that we're in, okay? And watch carefully. So, remember Jesus didn't speak these words in a vacuum, alright? Everybody hears words in a context. So, if I say to you, you will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds. What do you think? You hear it, and you say, huh. Return of Jesus, right? Now, why do you think that? The reason you think that is because that's what those words mean to you because that's what you've heard them to mean your whole life. You've seen billboards where there's a really interesting white, pale kind of looking, in a pale-yellow flannel robe Jesus, standing in clouds with the baby blue background behind him. And then there's some warning: The Son of Man will return soon, you know? And so, you get really amped, ah that's it! The return of Jesus! And so, you've seen this. And so, when you hear the words the Son of Man in the clouds, you say ha! Jesus has returned. But remember that when

you think of that, it's because you don't hear it in a vacuum. Well likewise, the disciples heard those words in a context also. They were not raised in a vacuum. Nor were they raised in American modern evangelical Christianity. So, they were raised in a different way. They were Jewish men who had memorized much of the Old Testament and participated in all of its rituals, and they had been part of its feasts, and its assemblies year after year, and they understood these things in a way that you and I don't because we don't spend a lot of time immersed in the Old Testament, not just reading it, but we don't participate in it the way they participated in it. So, we've got to ask this question. And it's not an optional question, alright? The question is, when Jesus' disciples heard the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken, and then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory, what went through their minds when they heard it? So, what's the most natural way that they would have heard this? They heard and said, oh whoa, so I believe that when they heard it that it was instantly recognizable to them. I really believe they heard it and they instantly said, well, we've heard all of that language before. Because remember, they knew the Old Testament really well. So look at verse 24 again, 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, the powers in the heavens will be shaken. So, here's the question, are we meant to read those words as being literal or being figurative, alright? So, if we read it as literal, then it means astronomical events that are happening in the sky that you could look up at and see. You'd look up and say, whoa, all the stars just fell from the sky and the sun just went dark. That's what it would literally mean. If it's figurative, then it means that it's using dramatic language to describe something that's not really happening in the way that it's being said. And that's what we understand figurative language to be. And we use that kind of language all the time, don't we? Have we ever said something? Have you ever seen a new father of a newborn baby, their first child and it's a little girl, and they're telling their friend the next day about the birth of their child and they say, I took one look at her and she stole my heart away, right? But we know that's not true. She didn't steal, if she stole his heart, he wouldn't be telling you the story. He would be dead. You don't live without a heart. And plus, she doesn't have the capability to steal the heart. She doesn't have the capability to do anything other than just cry, alright? Same thing when we hear somebody say something like, he inhaled his dinner. Well, he didn't do that either, or he would have died. We would have then been telling a story about the Heimlich maneuver. You don't inhale food, you eat, but it's a way of saying in dramatic fashion, he just scarfed it down, right, and it just ate it really quick. Well, remember that when the disciples asked Jesus about the temple being destroyed and he gives them this response, they understood in their day what was going on. So, in the Old Testament, this sort of language, of cosmic chaos, that is used to describe what's happening in the heavens in a very dramatic way is a way of describing by Old Testament prophets, dramatic events that are taking place on the earth. Not in heaven but on the earth. It's something, in other words, we would call earth-shattering. Earth-shattering itself being a figure of speech. The earth doesn't really shatter right? But we say if it's an earth-shattering event, and we really meant that, then none of us would be alive because the earth would be shattered, and we'd all be gone. But earth-shattering means that the implications of it changed everything, and that's what's happening here.

So, in the Old Testament, this sort of language is used all the time by the prophets to describe two things that happened simultaneously. The judgment of God and the overthrowing of an Empire or the upheaval of a nation, alright? So, it's always God's overthrowing of a nation that comes because of his judgment, and it leads to the destruction of that nation. So, Isaiah, the great prophet of the Old Testament, uses this very language, and I want to show you in Chapter 13 beginning in verse number 9, in referring to God's judgment on Babylon. So now listen to the language here, Behold, the day of the LORD comes. That's the day of judgment. Cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. So, what's the context? God's judgment is going to come upon Babylon. And how is it going to be described? Look at verse 10, For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light. So, notice its figurative language used to describe the judgment of God, the upheaval of political affairs on the earth, and the destruction of an earthly kingdom, alright? Isaiah later uses the same language in Chapter 34 to describe the destruction of Edom. Now listen to how it's described here, verse 4 Isaiah 34, All the host of heaven shall rot away. Now the word host means star in fact, the NIV translates this, All the stars in the sky will be dissolved, or the New Living Translation says, the heavens above will melt away and disappear. Now no one reads this and says, oh, so back way back you know, to 2,000 plus years ago, all the stars in the sky melted one day. There's no astronomical proof that all the stars of the universe melted in one day. We there, that doesn't happen, right? So, we have to understand this as figurative language, right? So, look at what he says. He says in Isaiah 34, all the stars are going to be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll. Has anybody ever seen the sky rolled up like a scroll? That doesn't happen. All their host, or all their stars, shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction. So, this is God's way of describing what he's going to do on the earth and it's using figurative language of something that's happened cosmically in the sky.

Look at Ezekiel chapter 32. The same language is used here to describe the destruction of Egypt. Now, this isn't the destruction of Egypt back whenever the exodus happened. This is years later. And years later, when the Babylonian's come in and destroy Egypt, it gets described as this in Ezekiel 32:7, When I blot you out, now notice this is God talking. So, God's the one who's going to do this, God is going to blot out Egypt, snuff them out. Here's how he's going to do it, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark. I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord God. I will trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your destruction among the nations, into the countries that you have not known. I will make many peoples appalled at you, and the hair of their kings shall bristle with horror because of you, watch, when I brandish my sword. Now notice, whose sword is it? It's Gods sword, when I brandish my sword. My sword. See that? Underline that 'my sword.' Now watch. They shall tremble every moment, every one for his own life, on the day of your downfall. For thus says the Lord GOD: The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you. Oh, no. Well, who's sword is it? I thought it was God's sword. But now I see here that it's going to be the king of Babylon's sword. So notice that the sword that God is referring to isn't a literal sword from heaven, but that he's going to use the king of Babylon and the nation of Babylon as his instrument, as his sword to do this judging

and this destruction, this destructing, of Egypt. Verse 15, When I make the land of Egypt desolate, and when the land is desolate of all that fills it, when I strike down all who dwell in it, then they will know that I am the LORD. Notice, God is going to judge and destroy Egypt. This is going to happen through the Babylonian's destruction of Egypt. And it's described in language of cosmic chaos. Stars, moons, suns, skies. This is their way of saying it was an earth-shattering event. So, when God judged and destroyed Babylon, Edom, and Egypt in these text that we looked at, it was not the literal sun, moon, and stars that were darkened. The stars didn't literally fall from the sky, right? But it was figurative language that was used to describe something earth-shattering. Now here's a really important point that I need you to really understand. This sort of figurative language is used consistently throughout Scripture whenever it's describing judgment and destruction from God. And that's important because whenever Scripture uses something consistently when referring to certain things in certain genres, then we as good Bible readers, have to apply it that way as well. We don't get to come to it and say, well, even though Scripture uses this consistently in this way all the time, when we come to this, we're starting from scratch. Forget all that. We do whatever we want with it. We don't get to do that. So we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture means that we not just allow other books of the Bible to interpret these books of the Bible, or these verses to interpret these verses, but we've got to allow the genres of Scripture and Scripture's consistent use of language, to be used all the time when it comes to these things. This is how you start to begin to make sense of these things that really are like spooky, mysterious passages, right? Ah man, remember that's going to talk about the sun and the moons and blood, and we have to just stop and look at it, right?

So, when the disciples were listening to Jesus, now up until this point, what has he been talking about? He's been talking about that going all the way back to Mark 11, right? That God is going to judge Jerusalem and its temple and it's going to be destroyed. And when they read the Old Testament, as they have read so many times before and they hear the prophets describe judgment like Isaiah or Ezekiel, and they hear about judgment and they hear about suns and moons and stars, they hear judgement, destruction, cosmic chaos. Jesus has been talking about judgment, destruction. Now he uses the same language of cosmic chaos. It just seems to be that they would clearly recognize this as being Old Testament prophetic language used of a national disaster that's about to take place. That's what it seems like. So, in other words, what I'm saying is this: I don't think that Jesus is talking about what's going to happen in the heavens. I think he's talking about what's going to happen to Jerusalem and the temple. And what's going to happen to Jerusalem and the temple? Well he has said for 23 verses now that it's going to be judged and destroyed. So, to me, it's very consistent. So that's why I think that verses 24 and 25 are about the judgment of God upon Israel and the destruction of the temple. So, you say, alright, okay, great. What about verse 26 and verse 27 though? Because look at verse 26, then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. So, you say alright, hey, if 1-23 is the temple in Jerusalem, great. 24, alright, never heard that before. But surely, verse 26 and 27, now we got to be talking about the return of Jesus. Now he's made the switch. Well again, I want to just say, let's just keep steady here for a moment and just say what did Jesus' his disciples think when they heard these words in their context? We have to keep asking that question. So once again, we're going to find that we actually have a rich historical backdrop in the Old Testament, language that again

would be unmistakable to these disciples. So, remember what I said at the beginning of this study in Mark 13, we're not to read into the text, to read over the text, or to read the text out of context. So, look, does the text say in verse 26, they will see the Son of Man coming to earth in clouds? No. See, if you do that, you read into it, right? You put the words 'to earth' in there. They're not in there. You put them in there. So, if it doesn't say that, well, then what the heck does it mean? Well, again, I think there's a rich historical backdrop that this text is set against. So, look at Daniel chapter 7 and look at verse 13 with me, alright? Daniel 7:13. This is after Daniel has prophesied about the downfall of all the great powers, the nations, the Babylonians have collapsed. The Mito Persian Empire has collapsed. God is bringing all the empires of the earth to nothing. And he's going to then, after bringing down an Empire, he's going to exalt the one true king of an empire that will last forever. So, in Daniel 7:13, it says this, I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven. Alright, now hold on. Look at that word, clouds. You see that, alright? Circle that word, clouds, with the clouds of heaven. What did it say in verse 26 of Mark chapter 13? They're going to see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. It says, coming in clouds. Remember? I said, don't insert the word coming to 'earth' in clouds. It says coming in clouds, alright? Look at what it says in Daniel 7, I saw, behold, with the clouds of heaven there came. Now, here we have the word cloud, and we have the word came in the same exact verse, I mean, right next to each other. There's something happening. Something is coming in the clouds. Something is coming with the clouds. And what is it that's coming? One like a son of man. So now we have a son of man, he's coming in the clouds, which sounds just like what we saw in Mark, Chapter 13:26 when it says, and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and glory. But watch this, and he came, there's the word 'came' again, circle it again, he came to oh, where's he going? To the Ancient of Days. Ah, so this Son of Man is coming in clouds with power and glory. But he is not coming to the earth. He's coming to the Ancient of Days. Now who's the Ancient of Days? That's God the Father. So, this Son is coming to the Ancient of Days, and when he gets there, he's presented before him, in verse 14 says, and to him was given dominion and glory. That sounds like power and glory. What did Jesus say? You're going to see the Son of Man coming with the clouds, in power, in glory, and that all people, nations, and language, should serve him. His dominion is an ever-lasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed.

So, you have to remember that Jesus' most used title for himself when Jesus talks about himself throughout his earthly ministry, his single most used title for himself, is the Son of Man. Now every one of these Jewish disciples of Jesus who are standing right there knew who the Son of Man was. They might not know who his actual identity was, but when they heard Son of Man, they knew who he was. This is the guy from Daniel chapter 7, they knew some things about the Son of Man. They said, hey, we know the Son of Man. He is the one who's going to come in the clouds to the Ancient of Days. He's coming in the clouds of heaven to God. He's the one who's going to have power and glory. He's the one who's going to be installed as King. He's the one who's going to have an everlasting kingdom. So, Mark, 13:26 seems, in a sense to look a lot like that, which seems to be for me, an illusion to Daniel 7. And so, it looks like Jesus may then not be talking about him descending to earth in the clouds at the end of history, but rather him ascending to the Father in heaven in the middle of history, which is radical for us. And you know why it's radical for us? Because that means that Jesus, in the middle of history, has been installed as not only Israel's king, but as the



universal Lord of everything and every place and everywhere that we would ever go, he would be the Lord. This seems to be something that tells us that Jesus is King. Now, remember I said, it doesn't appear to be a dissension, but on ascension. Well, where do we read about the ascension? Well we read about it in Acts chapter 1, after Jesus has been raised from the dead. He spent 40 days with his disciples talking about the kingdom. And in verse 6 of Acts 1, they say this, when they come together, these same Jewish disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" And he says to them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of sight. Now we always read this and just imagine that it means that suddenly the disciples were watching Jesus fly. But I think that if we were Jewish readers of the text and Jewish disciples of Jesus, standing there with him on that day, we would say, hey, we know what this means, because where did that cloud take him? Notice the language. The cloud took him. Where did it take him? It took him to the Ancient of Days. This is the ascension of Jesus. It's taking him to the throne room of Heaven to be installed as King and Lord of the Universe.

Now I think that's exactly what Jesus says to his accuser's during his trial in the very next chapter of this book. In Mark 14, Jesus is standing before the Jewish Council, who's going to condemn him to death and look at what he says in verse 58, we heard him say, I will destroy this temple. So now notice they're well aware of everything he's been talking about, and they're thinking that he means he's going to destroy that temple like, then, and he's going to come in and do it himself. He said he's going to destroy this temple. Look at verse 59, yet even about this testimonial, they didn't all agree, verse 60, and the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is that these men testify against you?" But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus answered and listen to Jesus's answer, I am, and you will see. Now hold on. Who's he talking to? Who's been mentioned twice? The high priest. This is Caiaphas. Twice Caiaphas has addressed Jesus. And now Jesus is directly responding to Caiaphas, and what does he say to him? You will see, you Caiaphas, you're going to see something. What does he tell him he's going to see? You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power. Okay, where have we seen that? We just saw that recently, that's Psalm 110:1 that I told you the most quoted Psalm in the entire New Testament. And it's a Messianic psalm about the enthronement of Jesus. And what does Jesus tell Caiaphas? You're going to see me enthroned. And he's going to be enthroned where? At the right hand of God the power, and when is it going happen. Well, now he's going to blend Psalm 110:1 with Daniel 7. You're going to see the Son of Man at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. Now you understand why liberal scholars say Jesus is mistaken and that he's wrong because they say, hey, Jesus, they rightly understand Jesus said this to Caiaphas, you're going to see this and they say, but that didn't happen. He didn't come back on a cloud and Caiaphas didn't see that, Caiaphas is dead. But what if it's because Jesus is saying to them, not you're going to see me descend upon a cloud the way you did on the billboard, but rather he's saying to them, Caiaphas, before you die know this, I'm going to be enthroned in heaven as the ruler of the universe. This was enough for Caiaphas

who didn't struggle through the billboard theology we have, to look at Jesus and say to him, enough of this blasphemy, send him away to be killed.

So, you see, they kind of understood it, right? So how would these disciples then and everybody else, know then after Jesus was dead, that he had been vindicated, that he was enthroned and ruling as the King and the world's true Lord. Well, I think the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70 would be the unmistakable sign on the earth that Jesus had been vindicated, that he was ruling, and the temple in Jerusalem which had rejected him and said 'let his blood be upon us and upon our children' and then killed him and said, we got rid of him, only found out within their generation some 40 years later, a generation that his blood was on them and their children. And this was the unmistakable, earth shattering sign that he was now enthroned in heaven and was ruling. And right now, in the middle of history is the King of heaven and earth, and all allegiance is due him. Caiaphas was wrong. Jesus was right. The temple is in ruins and that tells me Caiaphas is wrong. And Jesus has been seated in the heavens at the right hand of God as he approached him on a cloud coming to the Ancient of Days and he's the ruler of all things. So, we come then to verse 27, and then, after his enthronement is how I would then interpret that, after that, and then he the Son of Man Jesus, will send out the angels and they'll gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. So, if that doesn't mean then that this is Jesus returning in a second coming and then sending out angels to gather everybody up, well, then, what does it mean? Well, it's interesting because the word angel, angelos in Greek, is a word that literally just means messenger. And so, on one hand it could mean that his messengers are now, after the ascension of Jesus, the messengers were being sent forth. And what does Jesus say in Acts chapter 1? He says, stay right here, and I'm going to go to the Father and I'll give you the spirit and you'll have power. And then you'll go forth and be my witnesses. Where? Here, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the Earth. So, it could indicate that these are messengers sent by Jesus or it could, in the traditional sense, mean that it's angels who are going to accompany the preaching of the gospel and empower them as the gospel is being preached. In fact, Hebrews 1 says this very thing in verse 14, Are they, being angels, not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? So, it says that he's going to send out messengers, be it human preachers, or human preachers accompanied by angelic warriors who will strengthen them on their way as we saw in the book of Acts happened time and again. Paul sent out to preach, thrown in prison, angel opens the door, come out, go preach anyway. It seems that they're going to go out, and this verse is then referring to the mission of the gospel throughout the world and the growth of the church as people are being gathered into the kingdom.

So now Jesus is going to illustrate this point, and so look at verse 28, From the fig tree learn its lesson. Notice, he calls it a lesson. He says, as soon as its branch becomes tender and it's put out its leaves, you know that summer is near. Now fig trees in Israel, they lose their leaves in the winter and in the spring, in the late spring, their leaves come back. And so, when they see the leaves, it's a sign, hey, summer's coming. So, Jesus says the fig tree teaches you a lesson. You can see the victory and you can say, oh, this is about to happen. So also, just like that, verse 29, so also, when you see these things taking place, the things that he's referred to throughout all of verse 5-23, especially the abomination of desolation, you know that he is near at the very gates,

and in fact, the word 'he' in Greek is actually not a masculine pronoun. It's a neuter pronoun, which means 'it,' and so depends upon what you think it's modifying as to how it would be translated. But it could therefore be referring to when you see this abomination of desolation you know that it's taking place. Truly I say to you, this generation, those who would live to see the events that he just described, the word generation in Mark's gospel always means the particular people living at that moment. When you see this, truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things, there's that same phrase he's been using throughout this chapter, take place. Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. This is an amazing statement. Jesus is putting his words on par with God's and saying his words are eternal. In fact, they're so eternal and dependable and reliable that if he says it, that settles it. Now, here we come to verse 32 and this is where I think we reach the transition verse. I think that at this point in verse 32 Jesus now takes up the topic of his second coming. This is where I think it switches and here's why, alright? Notice Jesus says you can know, like, just like the fig tree when the destruction of Jerusalem is near, but you cannot know when Christ is going to return. He says in verse 32, But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. See that phrase 'but concerning,' here's a contrast between what he's been saying and what he's now going to say. He's been referring to those days. Plural. See, every time we see that 'those days,' 'in those days,' 'after that tribulation,' those days, I think, are that period of tribulation that that generation could see happening and know that the destruction of Jerusalem was near. There would be an unmistakable sign, in fact, the abomination of desolation. But he now refers to that day singular, a day in which no one can know including Jesus. So that's why I think you have to see a shift here because everything he's talked about so far has been those days plural, and he has spent 27 verses telling them how to know when those days are there happening. Now he talks about a singular day that no one, including him, can know about. So, it seems obvious that he has now shifted to a discussion of the second coming of Christ. In fact, he says here that day, uh, notice he says those days, but concerning 'that day,' that day, that's a term throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament that refers to the significant eschatological moment that's going to signal God's final consummation of the earth as we know it. It's a reference in the New Testament to the return of Christ every time that day, singular is used, just as it is here. And so, notice he says that for that day there's going to be no sign. There's no grounds for speculating. There's no reason to even look for one because you can't know it because Jesus doesn't know that day. The angels don't know that day, only the Father knows that day, so Jesus can't know the day, and the angels can't know the day, you can't know the day, but if you can know all those days and when the fig tree turns and when the summer's coming and when those days are coming, then that's got to be about something other than this day, because this day no one can understand. So what are we to do then? In light of the fact that we can't know anything about that day? Well, we can be on guard, he says. Here's that word again. Blepo. Once again, Mark picks up the main theme and using the same word again that we've seen in verse 5, verse 9, verse 23, and here again, be on guard. He drives the point home with two other Greek words in verses 33-37, he says, keep awake, stay awake, stay awake, stay awake. He illustrates this need for vigilance and the uncertainty of when he'll return by telling them another parable. And here's what he says in verse 34. It's like a man going on a journey and when he leaves home and he puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and he commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. And he says,

therefore, stay awake—for you do not know. You do not know. But up until this point, everything he's told them about the destruction of the temple they can know. But now he tells them, you can't know this. You don't know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he comes suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake. So look, Jesus is the master of the house and he's gone on a journey, he tells them, and he's going to return. And his followers are the servants in this. They've been put in charge of the house and in fact, notice they've been given work to do. They're not told to just sit around and idly speculate all day. Well, he left, wonder when he's going to return. I don't know. Let's just sit down and wait. No, they're given work to do, just like Jesus has gone. He ascended to the Father. He's the ruling Lord, and he's given us work to do. What work were we given to do? Oh, we're to go with the angels of heaven into every part of the earth and gather the elect because that's the commission that he gives his disciples in the great commission, isn't it? Well, he could return at any time without warning. And so they're to stay alert. The last verse, it broadens this command so that it applies not only to the disciples, but to everyone including you and me. He says in verse 37, what I say to you I say to all, not just those guys, but all of you, stay awake.

So, when you look at this text, it's pretty clear that there's a lot of stuff going on there and that, as I said at the beginning, that this is one of the most complex chapters in the whole New Testament to interpret well. And there's so many things going on. And there are so many places that you could make transitions from the second coming and the destruction of the temple and this verse, or do you make it in this verse? And so, when we look at this, we've got to understand, like, you know, people are just not going all agree on this, and that's okay. In fact, let me just tell you this. If I stood here and told you that somehow I'm the single person in human history who knows this to be absolutely certain and that if any of you don't agree with what I just said about this, that you're wrong because I'm the one who's right on this, then that would be the most ludicrous and arrogant statement that I could possibly make. It would show no regard for Scripture. No humility in coming to the Bible, and not sitting over the Bible but being under the authority of God's word and allowing for the fact that God is the one who is the ultimate authority behind his words. And so, there's a meaning in the text that is right. And just because there are ways that we will interpret it differently doesn't mean that there's not actually one meaning, there is one meaning, it just means that one of us might have got a little more right on this than others. I think when we stand before the Lord we will get it all sorted out, and we'll all kind of laugh and we'll look at each other as fellow pastors and scholars and say, I just didn't see that part. They'll say, well, yeah, I didn't see the part you saw, and we'll just understand that. So, we've got to be really gracious to each other on this. This is not the kind of thing that divides churches and Christians, or I should say should, because this does divide churches, it does divide Christians who get really worked up over the end times and say, that's heretical, and I don't believe that, if you don't believe this, and that just shouldn't be the case, in fact, of the person who says that is actually the person that has the problem because they're not demonstrating the humility that it takes to be one who accurately comes to Scripture and holds it in fear and trembling and says, Lord, I'll do the best I can and I'll stand before you and give an account for this. So, I think when we come to this, we just say, hey, we're not all going to agree on every fine detail on these things. That's perfectly okay. If you think that I think you should all

agree with me on this, then you're really mistaken because I think I'm right or I wouldn't have stood up here and said all of this. But I also leave tremendous room for the fact that you know, I've been studying the Scriptures for 20 years and I've done the best, I have read thousands of pages literally on this chapter alone in the last 20 years. There's a lot of technical stuff involved. My view has shifted at times, may shift again, but I really feel confident enough to be able to teach this in such a way that I'll say, I'm willing to answer to the Lord for all of those things. And I want you to be able to come to Scripture and have the same sort of generosity and grace towards the New Testament people as I do, alright? Here's the two things I think are just, absolutely, unmistakably clear that we all agree on, and if we don't agree on these two things, well, then there is a problem.

What I think is absolutely clear is this: Jesus has replaced the temple. I think that you have to understand that you will never go to a temple to have your sins forgiven. You want your sins forgiven, you want to meet God, you go to Jesus. Jesus is the place where you come if you want to meet God, if you want your sins forgiven, you don't go to a temple and offer a sacrifice because Jesus on the cross said in his last words, 'it is finished,' meaning that all of the sacrifices to be made for sin have come to a completion. They've come to an end in Christ, as Christ has taken all of the sin of his people upon himself and died facing the judgment of God once and for all for his people's sins, there's no more sacrifices to be made and the temple curtain was ripped in two, and 40 years later it was brought down and destroyed, never to be rebuilt again, in which sacrifices for the sins of God's people should ever be enacted. To think that we would go back to a temple and offer a sacrifice for sin is the greatest slap in the face to Jesus imaginable because it says Jesus, thanks for saying it's finished. But we got more work to do with these bulls and goats. And so, I think we all understand that you come to Jesus now. The temple's collapse is significant. The second thing I think that we all have to understand is this: Christ will return at any moment. At any moment. And therefore we're to stay awake, and I think it's really clear, we're not to look for any signs of this. In fact, we're not to assume that the day he's going to return is going to be a day that is somehow going to be different from any other day. In fact, it's just going to be a boring old day, like all the other days. The most unexpected day, the most normal day. And that's why, because it could happen at any moment on any boring normal day, that Jesus will reappear, that when that happens, we're meant to be awake in the moment.

So, I want to close. I know this has been lengthy. I want to appreciate you staying with me on this. This is important stuff. I mean, we've got to put our minds to Scripture, alright? We can't just come to it and just say, let's just read it, whatever it says to me, that's what it means. We've got to be good Bible people, alright? We got to come to the Scripture. That's why I said it is pastorally responsible of me to walk through this so carefully with you because I don't have a task to accomplish that says 'get through this as fast as possible and hurry up and make that a shorter sermon.' My task as a pastor is to make sure that you, the people that God has called me to shepherd, to oversee, to give an account for your life, that I have done that in a way in which I am ready to stand before God and say God as faithfully as I could by your help and through the Holy Spirit, I taught your people with the best of what you had given me in my resources and my abilities and with the faithfulness and the humility that I hope my heart possesses. And so I hope that even though this has been long that it's been

encouraging to you because you maybe have felt like you've gotten a better grasp and even if you want to run and think about how it might look different, maybe at least you come to the Scripture now with some better tools about how to approach it and you do it with humility. If anything, maybe I just haven't taught you in what I've said. But I hope and pray, this is the prayer of this pastor's heart, that I've taught you in the example of how I've approached this text. I want to end with this from 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. In verse 13 we read these words from the Apostle Paul, written to a group of Christians in the first century who were very confused about what was going on. And they were very confused, some of them even thought that maybe Jesus had returned and they had missed it. And here's what he said, But I don't want you to be uninformed brothers, about those who are asleep. That's those who have died, their brothers and sisters, so that you don't grieve as others do, who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this, we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. Notice here, he is not talking about coming to God in Daniel 7, he's talking about coming to us. This is what's called the Parousia. This is the language of the return of Christ. For the Lord himself, verse 16, will descend from heaven. Notice, it's now descending, with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words. Now, concerning the times and seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. In other words, you don't need me to tell you about when this is going to happen. Well, why not? Verse two, for you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. Notice what he's saying, hey, just like Jesus has already told you, unlike with the fig tree where you could pay attention to the signs about Jerusalem, there's nothing I can tell you about when he's going to come. It's going to be completely unexpected. Verse three says, while people are saying, ah, "there is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us, look, keep awake, be sober. For those who sleep, they sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, whether we're living or dead, we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you were doing.

And so, Father, to that end, we pray, that through your Holy Spirit we would be empowered to stay awake, and that we would look for your coming every day as we go about the work you've given us to do. And that Lord we would be encouraged in knowing that whether we're alive when it happens or whether we're dead when it happens, together we'll be caught up with you forever. To the glorious praise of our King Jesus, who will provide us joy for eternity when he appears. And so, in his name, we pray. Amen.