

The Signs of the Times Pt. 4 *Mark 13:24-37*

It is ironic we are studying *Mark 13* where Jesus taught about End Times as we hear about all of the things happening in Israel.

We did not plan to teach on End Times because of the things in the Middle East, in fact, we had already begun *Mark 13* when the war started in Israel as we have been teaching in this Gospel.

Sandra and I were praying and spoke about how this world belongs to the Lord and we are simply blessed to be a part of it.

Sandra said something along the lines of, *“Just imagine someone coming into our home and making a complete mess and disaster of our home and then simply leaving it that way”*.

How would anyone feel about someone messing up their home, having a complete lack of respect for their property?

Please open your Bible to *Mark 13* as we continue in that study.

Last time we were in *Mark*, we learned about the Abomination of Desolation from the *Book of Daniel*, and some things that will occur at the midpoint of the Tribulation.

The Abomination of Desolation is when the Anti-Christ stands in the Holy of holies in the rebuilt temple and places a statue of himself there and demands to be **worshiped** as God.

Then we learned that the warnings in the Olivet Discourse in *Mark 13*, were specifically addressed to a **Jewish** audience.

When the Jewish people rejected Christ, they were temporarily cut off from the blessings of a relationship with God and as a result, the Gospel was given to the Gentiles.

At the right time, God will restore Israel and a remnant of Jews who come to faith in Him, ending *the Times of the Gentiles*.

We learned how Satan will attempt to deceive people with false messiahs, finally offering the Antichrist as the Messiah.

Those who truly know God are the elect and because they know His Word, they will be prepared to **refute** all those deceptions.

The Great Tribulation is God's wrath poured out on a Christ-rejecting world, but the Great Tribulation is also meant to correct and **restore** His chosen people, Israel.

Today is our final lesson in our mini-series on the End Times and some commentators believe the first portion of this passage happens as a result of what mankind has done to planet earth.

In this section of *Mark 13*, Jesus will teach about His physical second coming as He warns not to guess the time of His return.

As Review **read** *Mark 13:21-23*

I. Coming in the clouds.

Read *Mark 13:24-27*

The Preterits people say these events symbolically occurred in 70 A.D., but notice Jesus gives us a timeline as He said in those days, after the tribulation, these things will happen.

This is obviously different than the Rapture where the saints, both living and dead will be changed, raised from the grave, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

We know this is not the rapture, because the whole earth sees the physical return of Christ. At the rapture, the Church will be caught up in the clouds to meet Jesus and only believers see it.

Several prophetic passages in *Isaiah, Joel, Ezekiel*, and others describe the cosmic disturbances that will precede and surround the glorious return of Jesus.

We are not told what causes these events but, they are so awesome that nobody will miss the physical coming of our great and awesome King Jesus!

Henry Ironside said, *“His second advent is to follow at once upon the close of that time of trouble, so that it is evident that this day of trial is yet in the future.*

*When it comes to its complete fulfillment, there will be remarkable **manifestations** among the heavenly bodies, and the Son of Man will be seen “coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”*

Many commentators believe the events in *Mark 13* are the same vision given to John, about the 6th Seal Judgment, in *Revelation*.

Revelation 6:12, I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.

Revelation 6:13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

Revelation 6:14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

(Notice ALL men) ***Revelation 6:15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,***

Revelation 6:16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! NKJV

Revelation 6:17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" NKJV

These are great cataclysmic judgments of God, *but are these judgments a direct result of what man has done to creation or simply a consequence of man's rebellion and sin against God?*

The promise to the Church, given by the Holy Spirit to Paul is found in, ***1 Thessalonians 5:9, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,***

1 Thessalonians 5:10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing”. NKJV

The Lamb’s wrath is for those who reject Him, not His Children.

They will see a great earthquake, the sun darkening, the moon appearing as blood, the stars falling from heaven, the sky being ripped open, and every mountain and island will be moved.

Isaiah 24:19 The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. NKJV

Imagine the Cascades, the Sierra’s, Mount Kilimanjaro and other mountains and islands moved in total upheaval.

Imagine volcanoes erupting as all of the faults and earthquakes belts around the world suddenly slip at the same time.

When volcanic eruptions happen, think about the dust and gases in the air and atmosphere, this could cause the sun to become darkened, and the moon to appear blood red.

Isaiah 13:10 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. NKJV

Think of all the forest fires or even what happened when Mount St. Helens erupted in May of 1980, how far the ash traveled and all of the destruction that was left behind in its wake.

Haggai 2:6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land;

Haggai 2:7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. NKJV

The stars falling could be a meteorite or **asteroids**, or space particles, like the sky receding.

The Apostle John had no idea of what he was seeing while receiving this vision from Jesus; he was simply an earth dweller receiving a vision from the Lord around 90 A.D.

Hal Lindsay thinks this is a picture of a nuclear exchange.

During a nuclear explosion, the atmosphere rolls back on itself.

There would be a rush of air back into a vacuum that would cause a lot of destruction during a nuclear explosion.

Isaiah 24:20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; Its transgression shall be heavy upon it, And it will fall, and not rise again. NKJV

Immanuel Velikovsky wrote a book called *Earth in Upheaval*, where he shares his findings from the years, he spent investigating why our earth is currently on a 23-degree tilt.

The earth is currently in a wobble. The two potential reasons he gave were: Joshua's long day, or the Flood of Noah's time.

Joshua 10:12 Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."

Joshua 10:13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. NKJV

The events occurring with the 6th seal could happen because of the earth being placed back on its right axis, but whatever it is, people immediately recognize it is wrath from the Lamb of God.

They realize this is a supernatural event, but instead of crying out to God to save them, they cry out for the rocks to hide them.

World leaders will hide underground in civil defense shelters designed to protect the leaders from nuclear war, similar to 9/11.

We are told when Jesus physically comes to earth and His elect will be gathered together to greet Him as their King and deliverer.

Mark 13:27 are the remnant Jews, who escaped to the Rock City of Petra after the Abomination of Desolation was revealed, and **others** who came to faith during the Tribulation and survived.

Then the throne of David will be set up again in Jerusalem, as Christ shall reign in righteousness for 1000 glorious years.

II. The ripe figs.

Read *Mark 13:28-31*

Fig trees have a pattern which Jesus showed in *vs. 28* “***When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.***”

In other words, as these things occur, we know there will be a natural response right after their occurrence.

There are many scriptures which tell us that the Fig Tree represents the nation of Israel.

Walvoord said, “*Christ was using a natural illustration. Because the fig tree brings forth new leaves late in the spring, the budding of the leaves is evidence that summer is near.*”

In a similar way, when those living in the great tribulation see the signs predicted, they will know that the second coming of Christ is near.”

I believe Jesus is communicating a couple of different things here, “***When you see the leaves you know summer is near.***”

When they see these signs and wonders described in *Mark 13*, they can know for sure the **end** is coming.

Jesus said, “***When you see all these things***” ...*What things?*

In proper context this means the things Jesus just warned Israel about through the Olivet Discourse: religious deceptions; geopolitical upheavals; and natural disasters.

After that Jesus spoke about the 7-year Tribulation, and about the rise of the Antichrist with the Abomination of Desolation.

The nation of Israel is at the center of the End Times.

Some theologians teach what is known as replacement theology, where they say the Lord used the church to replace Israel regarding all of the promises but, God has not forgotten Israel!

When the Nation of Israel ceased being a nation in 70 A.D., many people believed God replaced the nation of Israel with the Church, but they are **very different entities** within scripture.

Before 1948 with the rebirth of Israel, some people believed God had something else in mind in these prophecies, since Israel was no longer a nation. But the Lord is outside of time. **So...**

When the Lord makes a promise, even if it seems impossible, we should believe Him. God never changes and He is **Faithful**.

In *Ezekiel 37*, we read the story of the dry bones...

Ezekiel 37:11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'"

Ezekiel 37:12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves and bring you into the land of Israel."

Ezekiel 37:13 Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. NKJV

God allowed the rebirth of Israel after 1900 years of dispersion. On May 14, 1948, the head of the Jewish Agency and President Truman proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel.

*What did Jesus mean when He said **this generation**?*

Some critics have said Jesus made an error because He was talking about the Disciples and a generation is normally 30-100 years, and the 2nd coming didn't happen.

Other commentators offer a variety of differing opinions about the meaning of this statement.

Conservative scholars believe with this passage taken in context:

“Generation” here refers to people who will see the events (the Abomination of Desolation, the Great Tribulation, and the Signs in the heavens), and will not pass away until the end is complete.

The same **generation** that will experience the Great Tribulation will also witness the **second coming** of Christ.

The Abomination of Desolation, Great Tribulation, and Signs in the heavens will happen in rapid succession. We can be sure it will happen because He who promised is faithful and True.

In *vs. 31*, Jesus says Heaven and earth will pass away.

Almost everything known comes to an end, but the Word of God is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalm 119:89 Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

***Psalm 119:90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
You established the earth, and it abides. NKJV***

C. H. Spurgeon said, “*The Lord’s word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. “God’s purposes, promises, and precepts are all settled in his own mind, and none of them shall be **disturbed**.”*”

So, we can believe every word Jesus says.

III. No one knows.

Read ***Mark 13:32***

There are a couple of confusing details within this verse, and it can be interpreted in a couple of different ways.

1. *Mark 13:32* could mean, no one **prior** to the Abomination of Desolation, can know the day and hour of Jesus’ return.

Scripture says **after** the Abomination of Desolation, there will be 3 ½ years until Jesus returns and consumes the Anti-Christ.

So, after the Abomination of Desolation people should be able to discern an approximate time of the Lord’s return.

2. *Mark 13:32* could mean those who live through these signs will not know when the End Times **clock** starts.

The Abomination of Desolation will take time to happen; in order to set up the statue of Anti-Christ; there will have to be construction of a Temple and other deceptions from Anti-Christ.

Does the final clock begin at the early stages of the statue, or after the completion of the statue, or after the mark of the beast?

Daniel studied *Jeremiah* and discovered the 70 years of captivity were nearly over, but he wasn't sure on the exact date, because there were 3 deportations of Jews into Babylon.

Daniel didn't know when the Babylonian Captivity would end, but by **studying** the Old Testament he could make an estimate.

Even so, we cannot know the exact date of Jesus' return, but by studying the Word of God, we can know it is close!

3. How could Jesus, as God in the flesh, be unaware of the time of His own return?

What the critics fail to understand is what is known in Christian Theology as the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ, which is a fancy way of saying Jesus is the only One who has a dual nature.

According to *gotquestions.org*, “*The hypostatic union is the term used to describe how God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on a human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time.*”

Jesus is eternally 100% God and 100% man, in one being. When He came to earth, He set His prerogative deity aside, but never stopped being God, or else He was never God to begin with.

Within the Gospels we see Jesus doing things only the Lord God could do; He raised dead people, forgave sins, and claimed to be equal with the Father.

However, at other times, Jesus said that He only does the things the Father wants Him to do. **Why?**

When Jesus left His heavenly throne, He did not empty Himself of **divinity**, but He took upon Himself the limitations of a man.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,

Philippians 2:6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

Philippians 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. NKJV

Through the life of Christ, we see Jesus hungry, tired and even emotional at times. So we have a High Priest who understands what we experience with trials in this life.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. NKJV

While on earth, Jesus was submissive to the Father and His will.

On Earth Jesus submitted to human limitations and chose not to exercise some of His heavenly attributes. But there were other times where He did things only God can do.

IV. Practical Application (watch).

Read *Mark 13:33-37*

One report reported that a burglary happens approximately every 18 seconds in the U.S., with an average property loss of \$2,251 per incident.

Most insurance companies will give a deduction on insurance for having a working alarm system. The deductions can be 20%.

If the person who wanted to break into your house made an appointment to let you know the time, they planned on breaking in, you could **thwart** their attempted robbery.

Which homeowner here would not do everything in your power to stop an attempted robbery?

In proper context, we know Jesus is talking to people who are **Tribulation** Saints, those who will receive Christ sometime after the rapture of the Church.

Even with all the warnings, mankind as a whole will be caught not expecting Jesus to come back.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. NKJV

The readiness Jesus is speaking of here is not a logistical readiness like a homeowner, but a **spiritual** readiness.

So, even though in context, Jesus is speaking to Tribulation Saints, there are some practical lessons for Christians to glean.

How do Christians spiritually prepare for the Lord's coming?

First and foremost: No one can be ready to meet the Lord without receiving **forgiveness** of sin, which comes from the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

After receiving Christ as our Lord and Savior, we need to daily spend time with Him in prayer, in Bible reading, and fellowship.

We cannot know the Lord's direction and will for our lives without having an ongoing **relationship** that remains fresh, by spending time with Him.

We should be in constant fellowship with Him, be in fellowship with His other children at Church, and find a place to serve Him.

We should also keep a prayer journal in order to remember His faithfulness when He answered prayers; so that when we have times of doubt, we can call to remembrance His faithfulness.

We should be in a constant state of worship and thankfulness for all He has and will do for us. But most of all,

We must rely on the Holy Spirit to do all these things through us, so that we are not trying to live out our relationship with Christ in our own **power**.