

Lesson 11 9 October, 2011

Jesus Is Coming Again

Lesson Scope: *Mark 13*

Lesson Focus

The Jews eagerly awaited the day when Messiah would come and deliver them from foreign rule. When He arrived, however, they rejected Him, although His teaching and miracles clearly proved His identity.

As Jesus left the temple for the last time (Mark 13:1), one of His disciples pointed out its grand architecture. Jesus informed him that it would be completely decimated. Later, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, He answered the disciples' questions about the destruction of the temple and taught them about the end times. The message was, "Watch ... lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping."

The imminent return of Christ is a basic tenet of our faith. Never should a day go by that the Christian does not consider this event and his preparation for it. This lesson ought to heighten our awareness of this event by sharpening our awareness of signs around us.

The interpretation of Mark 13 can be controversial. Carefully study parallel passages (for example Daniel and Revelation) and be open to and stay within the bounds of revealed truth. This lesson is a call to be prepared to meet Christ.

No man knows when the Son of man will come "in the clouds with great power and glory." But Jesus has given signs to help us know when the time is near, and a command to watch lest that day come upon us unawares.

Lesson Aim: To consider signs and warnings related to the Second Coming of the Son of Man.

Theme Verse: *Mark 13:35*. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning.

Lesson Outline

1. Discerning the Signs II. Heeding the Warnings

Lesson Text:

Mark 13:1-37 ¹ And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!* ² And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. ³ And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? ⁵ And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any *man* deceive you: ⁶ For many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and shall deceive many. ⁷ And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for *such things* must needs be; but the end *shall not be* yet. ⁸ For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these *are* the beginnings of sorrows. ⁹ But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be published among all nations. ¹¹ But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. ¹² Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against *their* parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. ¹³ And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. ¹⁴ But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: ¹⁵ And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter *therein*, to take any thing out of his house: ¹⁶ And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. ¹⁷ But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! ¹⁸ And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. ¹⁹ For *in* those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. ²⁰ And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. ²¹ And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here *is* Christ; or, lo, *he is* there; believe *him* not: ²² For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and

wonders, to seduce, if *it were* possible, even the elect. ²³ But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. ²⁴ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, ²⁵ And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. ²⁶ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. ²⁸ Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: ²⁹ So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, *even* at the doors. ³⁰ Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. ³¹ Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. ³² But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. ³³ Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. ³⁴ *For the Son of man is* as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. ³⁵ Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: ³⁶ Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Questions for Study

Discerning the Signs

1. What are some indications that the end is approaching?
2. By what means do false teachers deceive people?
3. What should we learn from the fig tree?
4. How should we relate to the signs of the end times?

Heeding the Warnings

5. What is the warning in Mark 13, verses 5, 6, and 22?
6. How do we fulfill the command to "watch"?
7. What resources do we have available to face these times?
8. What occupies us while we wait for Christ's return?

Analyzing the Passage

Likely Jesus' position on the Mount of Olives "over against the temple" (Mark 13:3) allowed Him and his disciples to see the temple as He spoke. History tells us that the foundation stones of the temple were twenty-five

cubits long, about twelve cubits wide, and eight cubits high. Not only were they a marvel, but the ruination of such a structure illustrated the severe judgment that the Jews brought on themselves by their rejection of the Messiah.

The disciples asked about the destruction of the temple. Jesus did not stop with an explanation of Jerusalem's destruction, but He explained end-time events, including the need to watch for His return.

The end of time is illustrated by the fig tree. Events such as natural disasters (Mark 13:8), great trouble (Mark 13:19-20), and a shaking of the heavenly powers indicate that the end is near.

In referring to the abomination that makes desolate (Mark 13:14), the wording of Daniel 9:27 suggests that a person is in focus. It seems to have end-time fulfillment.

The time allotted is controlled by God the Father, and He will in His own good time bring the age to its conclusion.

To "take heed" is to pay close attention. To "watch" is to remain alert. To pay attention to the details and then allow ourselves to become drowsy will mean eternal doom.

Principles and Applications

Discerning the Signs

1. The last days are marked by many religious deceivers (Mark 13:5, 6, 22). These are bold persons intent on creating a following. Their interest is selfish, and their end is certain ruin. Their facade is the Name of Christ. They use supernatural power to deceive many. They ruthlessly pursue even the godly.

2. The end times are characterized by conflict among nations (Mark 13:7-8). The technology of the modern world has done nothing to ease relationships on the worldwide scale. We live in a time of much tension between nations. The near collapse of nations' financial systems increases the severity of the problem. The control of natural resources is another point of conflict. Man's organizations to promote peace, such as the United Nations, have had very limited success.

3. The last days will be marked by an increase of natural disasters (Mark 13:8, 24). Probably some of the calamity associated with these events will be strengthened by man's greed and poor stewardship. The Christian is not surprised by the activity of volcanoes, the devastation by earthquakes, or the destruction of tsunamis. These events are foretold to be precursory to our Lord's coming. The earth "wax [eth] old as doth a garment" (Hebrews

1:10, 11).

4. The coming of the Son of man will be marked by great changes in the celestial bodies (13:24-26). Someday, Jesus will return as victor over all enemies. All imposters will recognize that He alone is King of kings. The rebellious will admit their error, but will have no opportunity to repent. The universe as we know it will be folded up and changed (Hebrews 1:12).

Heeding the Warnings

5. The days of affliction will be shortened to preserve God's chosen (Mark 13:20, 27). "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:8). We are too small to comprehend God's purposes in all that He permits. We can rest assured that amid all the unrest, trouble, and destruction that will befall this earth, God will never lose sight of His elect. They are secure because "no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29).

6. Christ urges us to observe and understand the signs of the end times (Mark 13:14). The ability to discern the times we live in will keep us keenly aware of Christ's return. It also allows us to be discerning of the influences that pressure us. Some have erred by predicting the timing of events. This should not discourage our study of these things. Our belief about these events must stay within the bounds of revealed truth.

7. The signs of the end indicate that Christ's coming is very near (Mark 13:28-29). An experienced husbandman can predict very accurately when his budding plants will produce their harvest. After reading the Scriptures about the end times, we live with renewed expectancy of our Lord's return.

8. No man knows the exact time when Christ will return (Mark 13:32-33). This event will take place at the discretion of the Father. We live in constant readiness for His return, lest He comes and finds us sleeping. While we watch and wait, we occupy ourselves with the kingdom work He has assigned to us.

9. Christ warns us to be constantly awake and watchful for His return (Mark 13:34-37). Sometimes the night of evil might seem long. Our duty may seem tedious, our responsibility wearying. We must remain alert—the sleeping ones will be caught unprepared. It is not our duty to decide when the night should end—our duty is to watch.

Important Teachings

1. The last days are marked by many religious deceivers (Mark 13:5, 6, 22).

2. The end times are characterized by conflict among nations (Mark 13:7-

8).

3. The last days will be marked by an increase of natural disasters (Mark 13:8, 24).

4. The coming of the Son of man will be marked by great changes in the celestial bodies (Mark 13:24-26).

5. The days of affliction will be shortened to preserve God's chosen (Mark 13:20, 27).

6. Christ urges us to observe and understand the signs of the end times (Mark 13:14).

7. The signs of the end indicate that Christ's coming is very near (Mark 13:28-29).

8. No man knows the exact time when Christ will return (13:32- 33).

9. Christ warns us to be constantly awake and watchful for His return (Mark 13:34-37).

Answers to Questions

1. What are some indications that the end is approaching?

False Christs and those with ability to perform the miraculous will aim to deceive the elect. Deception will abound. The order of the heavens that we know will disintegrate. There will be national conflict.

2. By what means do false teachers deceive people?

They deceive by using false claims—"I am Christ." They use supernatural powers to persuade people to follow them.

3. What should we learn from the fig tree?

We can predict the time of harvest by observing the growth stage of a plant. Likewise, by carefully observing the times we live in, we get an indication of the nearness of the Lord's return.

4. How should we relate to the signs of the end times?

"Be not troubled." We are not surprised by unrest, calamity, and disaster, because we have been forewarned. We know that we are in God's care and that He will shorten the evil days and finally gather His elect from wherever they are.

5. What is the warning in verses 5, 6, and 22?

The warning here is to beware of counterfeits. Simply claiming to be Messiah—the Anointed One—is weightless. When circumstances in the world look desperate, remember that God will care for His own. We will avoid the pseudo-christs only if we remain alert.

6. How do we fulfill the command to "watch"?

We fulfill this command by being ready at all times. "Take ye heed." We

are cautious lest we become forgetful of His return. We expect He may arrive at any moment.

7. What resources do we have available to face these times? We have knowledge—"I have foretold you all things."

We have grace—"The Lord ... shortened those days," and "He ... shall gather together his elect."

We have the Word—"My words shall not pass away."

8. What occupies us while we wait for Christ's return?

We do the work He gave us. This may be church responsibilities, parenting, mission work, and so forth. We are stewards of Christ's possessions.

Summarizing the Lesson

Christian, seek not yet repose,
Cast thy dreams of ease away;
Thou art in the midst of foes:
 Watch and pray.

 Watch, as if on that alone
 Hung the issue of the day;
Pray that help may be sent down;
 Watch and pray.
 —Charlotte Elliott

Research Guide

1. Read the parallel passages in Matthew 24 and Luke 21.
2. Daniel 9 and 11 refer to the abomination of desolation.
3. Revelation 13 describes the deception by the beast