



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



The Gospel of Mark
Part 34
Mark 13:1-37

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Mark 13:1-37

(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus criticism of the Jerusalem religious establishment reaches its culmination in the prophecies of Mark 13.

This is a long teaching chapter that has been the subject of a LOT of critical discussion among Christian scholars.

The length of the teaching alone leads us to give it a place of importance.

But the subject matter is also part of the reason this teaching takes a place of prominence.

It has gone by three different names:

The “Eschatological Discourse” – because it deals with “last things” (“last things” in Greek is “eschatos”)

The “Olivet Discourse” – because of its setting on the Mount of Olives

The “Little Apocalypse” – because of the presence of apocalyptic elements.

Mark 13:1-37

(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

There is much debate within Christianity about the subject of eschatology.

There are several different approaches, which lead to different conclusions.

Apocalyptic literature has some very specific form and content.

We will see some of those here – predictions of family discord, predictions of persecution and tribulation, celestial portents, gatherings of angels.

But other standard elements of apocalyptic literature are missing, or elements are included that are NOT normal in apocalyptic literature:

This is a formal teaching setting, including direct comments

There is a lack of a vision as the occasion for the teaching, as is usually the case in apocalyptic literature

There is no review of history as leading up to this conclusion

There are no comments on God's previous attempts to deal with humanity

There is no depiction of earthly or heavenly battles

This teaching therefore seems to fall more in the category of “eschatological” than strictly “apocalyptic”.

Mark 13:1-37

(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

As we go through the chapter, we have three options:
Everything in Mark 13 is in the future to us.
Everything in Mark 13 is in the past to us.
Part of Mark 13 is future, and part of it is past.

Different scholars and Christian believers have different views on their interpretation of this – so understand that this presentation represents its author's best personal understanding!

Most of the issues around the text surround how closely linked are the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem and the coming of the Son of Man.

In other literature from just before the time period of Mark's Gospel, there are prophecies of the destruction of the temple, as there are prophecies of a coming Messiah.

Most likely, although it is easy to read these events in chapter 13 as closely linked in time (and therefore, all in either the past or future to us), they are likely NOT linked in time.

We will see that this provides a straightforward reading and understandability of the passage.

Mark 13:1 (NIV)

As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

“leaving the temple”

Jesus has been teaching in the temple precincts throughout chapters 11 and 12, with increasing hostility from the ruling priests.

Jesus probably exits through the eastern gate, descending to the foot of the Mount of Olives, and then ascending to where they can turn around and view the complex.

“one of his disciples said to him”

The disciple is not asking a question, but making an innocent observation.

Most of Jesus’ teaching throughout Mark’s Gospel has come as the result of a question. Here, Jesus seizes an opportunity as the result of a comment.

“magnificent buildings”

The grandeur and beauty of the temple really WAS impressive.

Herod the Great had been dead for over 30 years, but his massive expansion project was still underway, and continued for decades longer.

Could this disciple have anticipated taking possession of it when its current leaders were evicted, and the Kingdom of God arrived in its fullness?

Mark 13:2 (NIV)

“Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

“every one will be thrown down”

This did, in fact, happen in the Jewish war from 66-70 AD.

Excavations show the extent of this destruction, which probably took months if not years.

Total and complete destruction was not accomplished, but many large stones WERE literally thrown down, crushing the floors beneath and crashing into rooms beneath.

These stones could weigh upwards of 500 to 600 tons, and as large as 45 feet long by 10 feet high!

Jesus' words are, therefore, startling to the disciples!

They knew Jesus criticized the temple establishment, but were probably surprised by this prediction of the temple's destruction.

The structure itself suggested permanence, not impending catastrophe or destruction.

Jesus' words imply that hopes for Jerusalem's repentance are now gone – the verbal sparring is over, and dire consequences are all that is left, with the utter rejection of God's Messiah.

The Gospel of Mark was written as the temple's destruction was imminent, perhaps 15 to 20 years away.

Mark 13:3 (NIV)

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,

“on the Mount of Olives” (continued)

The location adds poignancy to the entire teaching.

Pronouncing judgment on Jerusalem from this location has Old Testament precedent:

Ezekiel 11:1-4 – “Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD that faces east. There at the entrance to the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. The LORD said to me, ‘Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving wicked advice in this city. They say, “Will it not soon be time to build houses? This city is a cooking pot, and we are the meat.” Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, son of man.’”

Zechariah 14:3-4 – “Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.”

“Peter, James, John and Andrew”

These are the first two sets of disciples – two pairs of brothers.

Again, we see private instruction for an inner core of disciples.

Mark 13:4 (NIV)

“Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

“When ... what will be the sign”

The disciples infer that such destruction would have to be occasioned by war or a natural catastrophe.

A request for a sign is thoroughly Jewish –

Mark 8:11 – “The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven.”

1 Corinthians 1:22 – “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom.”

Here, the disciples want to be forewarned about such a major event!

Mark 13:5-6 (NIV)

Jesus said to them:
“Watch out that no one
deceives you. Many will
come in my name,
claiming, ‘I am he,’ and
will deceive many.”

“Watch out”

Jesus begins by warning the disciples NOT to be misled about what they might ASSUME is a sign!

He will discuss ACTUAL signs later.

“many will come in my name”

“In my name” means claiming Jesus’ authority, and also claiming to be the Messiah after Jesus is gone.

The first century Jewish historian Josephus identifies many “fake kings”, pretenders to the Jewish throne, claiming to BE Israel’s rightful king, in the 66-70 AD time frame.

Mark 13:7 (NIV)

“When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.”

“wars and rumors of wars”

There was great turmoil in the Roman Empire after Nero's death in 68 AD, including riots and battles, including the Jewish War of rebellion against Rome.

There was one emperor after another in the period from 68-69 AD – this is called, historically, the “Year of the Four Emperors”.

The final one of these four was Vespasian, and it was his son, Titus (who himself later became emperor) who destroyed the temple in 70 AD.

“the end is still to come”

These events do NOT imply the end of the human era, or even the imminent return of Jesus (a topic on which Jesus will say more later).

Mark 13:8 (NIV)

“Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.”

“nation against nation”

Many uprisings, skirmishes, and rebellions happened in this time period after Nero’s death, as many conquered territories – not just Judea – tried to rebel.

“earthquakes”

These were often associated with God’s coming in judgment in Old Testament prophecy, and were a standard part of apocalyptic language.

There was a large one in Laodicea in 61 AD, as well as in Pompeii in 62 AD. (The big one in Pompeii was later, in 79 AD).

“famines”

These were also prominent in prophetic judgments, and an expected part of end times.

There was a severe famine in Judea in 46 AD.

“beginning of birth pains”

That is, much worse is still to come, and these events are only the beginning.

NONE of these are the “signs” the disciples ask about ...

But they COULD deceive them into thinking so!

Mark 13:9 (NIV)

“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.”

“you will be handed over”

Now, warnings of persecution begin.

“local councils”

This could mean the Jewish Sanhedrin, or the Roman jurisdictional councils.

“flogged in the synagogues”

We see this happening frequently in the book of Acts. Christians will be treated as heretics and disturbers of the community.

“stand before governors and kings”

This especially brings Paul to mind, as he stood before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa – see Acts chapters 24 through 26.

Mark 13:10-11

(NIV)

“And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”

“gospel must first be preached to all nations”

That is, before the end can come (referring back to verse 7).

The gospel is the good news of the Kingdom that Jesus has been proclaiming.

Jesus DOES expect the gospel to go to all:

Mark 11:17 – “And has he taught them, he said, ‘Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’””

“do not worry about what to say”

The prospect of going before councils would be intimidating and probably frightening to these untrained men.

They need this kind of assurance if this is their future!

“not you speaking but the Holy Spirit”

Jesus’ assurance may recall God’s promise to Moses to enable him to speak before Pharaoh:

Exodus 4:11-12 – “The LORD said to him, ‘Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.’”

We see the Holy Spirit giving the apostles words to speak in their own defense throughout the book of Acts.

Mark 13:12 (NIV)

“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.”

“betray ... rebel ... put to death”

Opposition to the gospel will not only be political or social, but even from within the immediate family.

Jesus predicted this kind of family response earlier as well, according to Matthew’s Gospel:

Matthew 10:35 – “For I have come to turn ”a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.””

Jesus here has quoted Micah 7:6, demonstrating, along with Isaiah, that divided family is also a fixture of eschatological expectation:

Isaiah 19:2 – “I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian – brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.”

Mark 13:13 (NIV)

“All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

“all men will hate you”

The gospel is THAT controversial!

“All” here means every segment of society.

“stands firm to the end will be saved”

“To the end” means “ultimately” or “finally” – some scholars maintain that it means “until your death”.

The point is to endure through all of this, not abandoning your faith.

This first section of Jesus’ teaching in chapter 13 has inspired and sustained Christian missionaries through difficult times for many centuries.

No matter how severe persecution is, God’s plan is working itself out.

Jesus himself WARNED of this! None of this kind of response to his gospel should surprise us.

Mark 13:14 (NIV)

“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation standing where it does not belong – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.’”

The next section of Jesus’ Eschatological Discourse, from 13:14-23, more fully describes the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

There are many parallels in this passage to the events leading up to the Jewish revolt against Rome that took place in 66-74 AD.

But there are other elements that do NOT line up as easily.

Still, it is likely that most of this section is pointing toward events in Jerusalem’s NEAR future at the time it was written.

Jesus has spoken in generalities to this point – now, he gets specific.

Mark 13:14 (NIV)

“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation standing where it does not belong – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.’”

“the abomination that causes desolation”

Jesus’ warning to flee Judea hinges on this action – but what is he referring to?

The language derives from the book of Daniel’s prophecy about “the ruler who will come”:

Daniel 9:27 – “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’. In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

Daniel 11:31 – “His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.”

Daniel 12:11 – “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.”

There is also a specific event in Israel’s recent history that this language is applied to in the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees:

1 Maccabees 1:54 – “Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah.”

This refers to the fact that in 167 BC, Antiochus IV set up a pagan altar for the sacrifice of swine in the temple, at which time he renamed the temple in honor of Zeus.

This was an unspeakable affront to the sanctity of the temple to the Jews.

Mark 13:14 (NIV)

“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation standing where it does not belong – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.’”

“the abomination that causes desolation” (continued)

So Jesus NOW refers to a coming SIMILAR unspeakable affront against the temple using the same language.

Some interpreters believe this is still yet to happen, even though the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. They believe it refers to a future event after the temple is rebuilt.

If so, perhaps this action is to be taken by the same person Paul refers to in 2 Thessalonians as the “man of lawlessness” who “takes his place in the temple” – the Antichrist:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 – “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”

Many other interpreters believe this refers to any one of several first century AD events:

Around 37-41 AD, Caligula ordered a statue of himself to be erected in the temple, but the outcry caused him to back down.

Romans DID carry their standards into the temple and erect them prior to the destruction in 70 AD.

MOST interpreters believe Jesus uses the reference to Daniel less specifically, to refer to the actions of Rome leading up to the destruction itself.

Mark 13:14 (NIV)

“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation standing where it does not belong – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.’”

“let the reader understand”

This is an obvious insertion into Jesus’ words by the author, Mark.

It is an “aside” to remind the reader of the book of Daniel and what had happened under Antiochus IV – how THOSE words had likewise been used as a reference to temple destruction.

“flee to the mountains”

The danger will be in Jerusalem proper, not in the surrounding areas.

The words point to a LOCAL, not a GLOBAL, crisis. Fleeing to the mountains would not be helpful if these words were pointing to a global disaster.

Jesus basically says, when something has happened that makes worship in the temple impossible (which would have to involve some sort of desecration of the temple), it is time to leave Jerusalem.

Tradition says that in 70 AD, during the days leading up to the temple destruction, that Christians DID flee for the city of Pella, in Perea, across the Jordan River, in response to Jesus’ warning.

Mark 13:15-17

(NIV)

“Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!”

“Let no one ...”

All of these words indicate extreme urgency – akin to fleeing a burning building.

It will be better to flee and perhaps be uncomfortable than to run back for something and risk death.

“How dreadful”

Traditionally, the words are translated as “Woe upon” – they are words for utterly horrible conditions.

Verses 15-16 suggest dropping any burden you might carry in order to be able to run ...

But pregnant women and nursing mothers cannot “drop what they are carrying”!

Mark 13:18-19

(NIV)

“Pray that this will not take place in winter, because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now – and never to be equaled again.”

“not take place in winter”

This is simply because travel is so much more difficult then.

“distress”

This event will eclipse all other biblical and historical crises.

This is astounding, considering the flood, the Babylonian captivity, and even the war with Antiochus IV where he DID desecrate the temple.

Again, we see similar language from Daniel –

Daniel 12:1 – “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.”

These words **CONTRAST** verses 5-8, which were called the “beginning of birth pains”. **NOW**, serious trouble has arrived!

Mark 13:20-21

(NIV)

“If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it.”

“cut short those days, no one would survive”

The reference does seem to refer to the Jewish War, in which many died, but thousands did survive.

“the sake of the elect”

In the Old Testament, the “elect” or the “chosen” are the people of the covenant:

Psalm 105:6 – “O descendants of Abraham his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones.”

“here is the Christ!”

The warning about false Messiahs from verse 6 is repeated – this was a serious threat to be faced by believers!

Mark 13:22-23

(NIV)

“For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect – if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.”

“and false prophets”

Not just false Messiahs, but Israel’s historic problem of false prophets will also continue, as they likely speak in favor of these false Messiahs.

“perform signs and miracles”

Background for this warning in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 – “If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, ‘Let us follow other gods’ (gods you have not known) ‘and let us worship them,’ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Paul also writes about the false signs and wonders that will accompany the appearance of the “man of lawlessness””

2 Thessalonians 2:9 – “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.”

Remember that Jesus refused to offer signs – the false prophets and messiahs WILL perform signs, willingly.

“Be on your guard”

The warnings, and the fact that Jesus has GIVEN these warnings, are the only comfort in a frightening and discouraging prophecy.

Mark 13:24 (NIV)

“But in those days,
following that distress,
‘the sun will be
darkened, and the moon
will not give its light;’”

“following that distress”

That is, the events about to be described will happen
AFTER Jerusalem’s destruction.

But note that HOW LONG after is not mentioned.

“In those days” is standard eschatological language, to
talk about the day in which the end of time comes.

It is NOT necessarily a reference back to the time period
of verses 14-23 – “those days” are not necessarily the days of the
Jerusalem destruction.

“the sun will be darkened ...”

These are cosmic signs that will accompany what is about
to happen.

To some extent, these verses follow Isaiah’s passages
about the destruction of Babylon:

Isaiah 13:10 – “The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show
their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.”

Isaiah 34:4 – “All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky
rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like
shriveled figs from the fig tree.”

The signs indicate an “undoing” of the fourth day of
Creation.

Mark 13:25 (NIV)

“the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

“heavenly bodies will be shaken”

Cosmic language often accompanies the foretelling of judgment against a city or country.

Joel, concerning Jerusalem:

Joel 2:10 – “Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine.”

Ezekiel, concerning Egypt:

Ezekiel 32:7-8 – “When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land, declares the Sovereign LORD.”

The signs in this passage in Mark may foretell SPECIFICALLY Judah’s doom.

BUT ... such cosmic events ALSO accompany theophanies – appearances of God – in the Old Testament:

Judges 5:5 – “The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel.”

Amos 9:5 – “The Lord, the LORD Almighty, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn – the whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt.”

Micah 1:4 – “The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.”

This jibes better with what is described next than the idea of a catastrophic judgment.

Mark 13:26-27

(NIV)

“At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”

“Son of Man coming in clouds”

This is language straight from Daniel 7:13.

Daniel 7:13 – “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.”

As we have seen throughout Mark, Jesus seems to strongly identify himself with this prophesied figure, and therefore foretells his own return.

“he will send his angels”

This is an astounding claim, as in the Old Testament only God commands and directs angels.

In Mark 8:38, Jesus had already referred to his coming with angels:

Mark 8:38 – “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

The statement is an equation of the Son of Man with divine power (as in Daniel).

Mark 13:26-27

(NIV)

“At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”

“gather his elect”

Followers of Jesus will have been scattered throughout the earth:

Zechariah 2:6 – “‘Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north,’ declares the Lord, ‘for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven,’ declares the LORD.”

Gathering the exiles was understood as a Messianic task. Jesus actually begins to exemplify this by gathering followers and disciples.

REMEMBER ... all of these events are SEPARATE from the events in verses 14-23, which were about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

THESE events accompany the coming of the Son of Man – Christ’s return.

Verse 26 has specifically said “AT THAT TIME” the Son of Man will come.

Mark 13:28 (NIV)

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.”

This is important to note:

There is a parallelism going on in the following section of the passage:

Verses 28-31 refer back to verses 14-23, and the destruction of the temple.

Verses 32-37 refer back to verses 24-27, and the coming of the Son of Man.

Thus, there ARE signs that help to foretell the destruction of the temple ...

But NO signs to foretell the coming of the Son of Man!

“learn this lesson”

The word here is actually “parable” – so we should read this short story as a parable.

“you know that summer is near”

Buds form and leaves sprout just before the summer comes, and you can know summer is near simply by observing them.

Mark 13:29-30

(NIV)

“Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.”

“you know that it is near”

When you see the events of verses 14-23, then the destruction of the temple is near – you just need to be observant of these signs.

This actually directly answers the disciples’ original question about “when the stones will be thrown down”.

Jesus says, “when worship becomes impossible”.

“this generation will not pass away”

The destruction of the temple and Jerusalem is imminent.

It is God’s judgment against Jerusalem for the past failures Jesus has been critical of, and the present failure to respond to Jesus – and it will happen soon, within 40 years.

Remember, it DID happen, in 70 AD.

The warning is to leave Jerusalem when you see it coming!

Mark 13:31 (NIV)

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

“My words will never pass away”

Only GOD’S word is regarded as eternal in the Old Testament:

Isaiah 40:7-8 – “The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”

Torah was eternal – So Jesus is here equating HIS teaching with Torah.

Remember, Jesus had engaged in controversy over his relationship to and authority over Torah before, in 2:23-3:6.

Mark 13:32 (NIV)

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

Reminder! These verses are now linked back to verses 24-27, and the coming of the Son of Man.

“No one knows”

In contrast to signs pointing to the destruction of the temple, the timing of the coming of the Son of Man is a complete mystery, known only to the Father.

The early church struggled with the idea of the Son not knowing something the Father knows, since Jesus IS the incarnation of God ... and WE might, too!

There are actually early manuscripts of Mark's Gospel that leave these words out!

In Luke's parallel account, he omits the verse entirely.

In John's Gospel, John insists on Jesus “knowing all things” – again, and again, and again!

These facts strongly suggest that this is an authentic saying of Jesus! The general rule is that the more difficult it is to understand and make sense of a text, and the more there is evidence of ignoring or challenging it in later manuscripts, the more likely it is genuine.

The point here is that if Jesus and God's angels don't know when the end will come, NO ONE can know!

A lesson for us: Not even terrible turmoil in the world gives us a clue!

Mark 13:33-34

(NIV)

“Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.”

“Be alert!”

This is the primary admonition throughout the entire teaching.

Disciples must be ready since the time cannot be known.

This is ALSO part of the answer to the disciples’ original question.

“like a man going away”

Jesus tells another mini-parable related now to his return, NOT to the destruction of the temple.

The master expects his servants to be diligent in watching over their appointed tasks while he is away.

Mark 13:35-36

(NIV)

“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back – whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.”

“you do not know when the owner of the house will come back”

Note the change of pronoun here!

Now, the disciples ARE the servants!

Jesus says, “YOU do not know when the LORD will return”!

The four watches of the night, as the culture of that day recognized, are the time frames listed.

This underscores the need to be alert ALWAYS.

“do not let him find you sleeping”

To do so would be to fail to have obeyed the master’s orders.

Shortly, we will see that the disciples WILL be found sleeping while Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Mark 13:37 (NIV)

“What I say to you, I
say to everyone:
‘Watch!’”

“I say to everyone, ‘Watch!’”

The command is not just for the four who are receiving this instruction – Jesus says this **TO EVERYONE**.

That means the original disciples, the early church ... and **US!**

We need to stop worrying about when and how Christ will return, and go about our assigned work, as the church, until Christ’s return.

Mark 13:1-37

(NIV)

SUMMARY

The Eschatological Discourse is one of Jesus' longest teaching moments in all of Mark's Gospel.

The teaching is prompted by a disciple's comment about the magnificence of the temple structure.

But Jesus goes on to proclaim a time of persecution that will lead to its destruction.

Jesus goes on, though, to foretell his own Second Coming, using the Son of Man imagery from Daniel.

Signs will be available to the current generation to alert them to the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

But no signs will foretell the coming of the Son of Man – an event whose timing is known only to God the Father.

The disciples are given the same direction to be prepared for both events: **KEEP WATCH!**



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