

## “The Return of the Messiah”

November 6, 2016

Mark 13:24-37

### I. Introduction

When some of Jesus’ disciples asked, “**When will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?**” in [Mark 13:4](#), they got an answer that must have baffled them (and continues to baffle many people today). Jesus created as many questions as He answered. The disciples’ questions went beyond the destruction of the temple to the time of the Lord’s 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and the end of the age. Since they knew that Jesus was the Messiah ([Mark 8:29](#)), they wondered when He would establish His prophesied kingdom. In His extended answer, Jesus explained that an intervening period of time would elapse before His earthly kingdom would begin. Using the analogy of birth pains, Jesus explained that devastating events would intensify throughout the period of time between His 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comings. The intensity of wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, and persecution would peak during the final tribulation period, just before His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

Towards the end of time, there seems to be 2 different returnings of Jesus to the earth. One is the Rapture of the church. At the Rapture, Jesus remains in the sky as He gathers His children—Christians—to be with Him-- [turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#). In His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming—His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent is different, Jesus is doing more than calling from the sky—He is coming to the earth to rule for 1000 years. It’s the events leading up to this 2<sup>nd</sup> coming that Jesus has been describing. In today Scripture, He described His dramatic appearance beginning with Earthly Signs.

### II. Jesus’ Dramatic Appearance

**A. Earthly Signs** Jesus explained that “**in those days, following that distress,**” i.e. [at the end of the tribulation period](#), He will return. As Jesus described His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent, He gave 4 features of His return. As we have already seen, earth’s final days will be characterized by unrestrained immorality, unparalleled devastation, and extreme persecution of all believers and Jewish people carried out at the behest of the Antichrist and his forces—*we may think things are bad now, but you haven’t seen anything yet*. These *wars & rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, and persecutions* are earthly signs of Jesus’ return. Jesus said that following all of this, He will return to earth in glory and judgment. As well as earthly signs, there will be heavenly signs.

**B. Heavenly Signs** The heavenly signs, i.e. the sun, moon, & stars, of which Jesus spoke would foretell His return have also been predicted by the prophets—e.g. [turn to Isaiah 13:9-13](#). [Joel 2:31](#) says, “**The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and**

dreadful day of the LORD.” Luke writes in [Luke 21:25-26](#), “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.” It’s understandable that people will not be handling this well at all. Following these earthly and heavenly signs, will be . . .

**C. Jesus’ Appearance** He said, “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” [2 Thessalonians 2:17](#) puts it this way, “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.” The disciples had asked Jesus about the sign of His coming. He explained that earthly signs and heavenly signs would precede His second coming, but the ultimate sign will be when He appears. The 3<sup>rd</sup> feature is Jesus’ appearance.

John wrote in [Revelation 19:11-12](#), “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.” With perfect righteousness and absolute authority, the Lord Jesus will judge His enemies, including the Antichrist who will be cast into the lake of fire ([Revelation 19:20](#)). Satan will be bound for 1000 years ([Revelation 20:1-3](#)) and Christ’s millennial reign will begin. Finally, seated on His earthly throne, the Lord Jesus Christ will perfectly rule the nations as their Sovereign and King ([Revelation 12:5](#)).

**D. Gathering of the Saints** [Matthew 24:31](#) adds that “with a loud trumpet call,” the “elect,” the believers who came to saving faith during the tribulation and are still alive on the earth, including the 144,000 Jews of [Revelation 7:1-8](#), will be gathered from across the world and assembled together. This is the fourth feature of Christ’s return: gathering of the saints. This will include all converts including the Jews who as [Zechariah 12:10](#) says, “will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”

### III. Final Warnings

**A. The Parable from the Fig Tree** Jesus didn’t want His disciples to get so caught up in the prophecies of the future that they would neglect the responsibilities of the present so He closed the Olivet Discourse with several parables. Mark recorded 2 of them while [Matthew 25](#) adds three other parables: the bridesmaids, the talents, and the sheep and the goats. The first parable Mark included emphasizes knowing that Jesus’ coming is near, while the second parable emphasizes not knowing the time of His return.

The 1<sup>st</sup> parable: *the Parable from the Fig Tree* is really addressed to the Tribulation saints. In the same way that one can predict the coming of summer based on the arrival of tree leaves in spring, so believers at the end of the age will be able to anticipate Christ's return when they **"See these things happening"**—i.e. all the earthly and heavenly catastrophes Jesus has already predicted.

Jesus said, **"Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened."** **"This generation"** refers to the generation entering the tribulation period, which will be the same generation alive at the return of Christ. Since the tribulation covers 7 years, a single generation will experience it all.

Emphasizing the certainty of His prophesies, Jesus said, **"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."** Heaven and earth are temporary, John wrote in **Revelation 21:1**, **"Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."** But the words of Christ will never pass away. In **Matthew 5:18** Jesus said, **"For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."** What Jesus said about His return and the end of the age is unalterable truth. It will happen exactly as He said it would, because His words cannot falter or fail—**Hebrews 6:18** says, **"It is impossible for God to lie."**

**B. The Parable of the Doorkeeper** The 2<sup>nd</sup> parable—the parable of the doorkeeper—warns all Christians to be alert, because no one knows when Jesus will return. He said, **"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."** When Jesus came to the earth, **Philippians 2:5-8** says that He voluntarily restricted the use of His divine attributes; **John 1:45-49; 4:34; 5:30** say that He subjected Himself and His attributes to the Father's will and the Holy Spirit's leading. So during His incarnation, Jesus didn't know the time of His return, but, after His resurrection, Jesus resumed the full knowledge He possessed from eternity past as the second member of the Trinity (e.g. **Matthew 28:18; John 21:17**).

Like the servants of a master who have no advance warning of when the master of the house will return, Christians have no advance warning of when the Lord Jesus will return. Just like the servants have specific duties to perform faithfully while they looked for their master to return, Christians have tasks which Jesus has given us which we are to perform faithfully as we look for the Lord to return. Jesus said to **"be on guard. Be alert!"**

Jesus said that good doorkeepers would keep constant watch, so that they are prepared and ready to welcome their Master upon His arrival, regardless of the time of day or night. Jesus' point was that His return could occur at any time, even in the middle of the night, and, consequently,

believers are told to **“Watch!”** They must be at their best; they must be alert, they must guard against any temptation towards spiritual complacency, distraction, or slumber—[turn to Romans 13:11-14](#).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In response to the disciples’ question about the end of the age, the Lord Jesus explained that He would return after a period of time but He didn’t give precise dates or times. He did predict that this time will culminate in a final, catastrophic period of global tribulation. Jesus forewarned the future generation that will experience these final events, including the rise of the Antichrist and the desecration of the temple, that the end would be imminent. Regardless of the age, Christians may be assured of two things: that the coming of the Lord is certain and that it will occur someday.

Jesus’ teaching reminds all of us that this world is temporary—only what is done for Christ will last. We must be watchful. We must be about the tasks He has given us. When He comes back to earth, Jesus isn’t going to ask whose predictions of the exact date were accurate. He will want to know what we have done for Him, in His name. Jesus said in [John 4:35](#), **“Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”** Are we proclaiming the Gospel to those around us and to the world? Are we fulfilling the assigned tasks He has given each one of us to do?

[2 Corinthians 5:20](#) says that **“We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.”** What kind of representative are you for Jesus Christ?

We may not experience the terrible sufferings described in this chapter, but we will have our share of persecution and tribulation in this world before the Lord returns. The warnings of this message in Mark 13 still apply to our lives: **“Watch out that no one deceives you”** ([Mark 13:5](#)); **“Be on your guard”** ([Mark 13:9, 23](#)); **“Be on guard! Be alert!”** ([Mark 13:33](#)); **“What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”** ([Mark 13:37](#)). “Watch” means to be alert, to stay at one’s best, to stay awake—  
are you watching?