

Watching and Waiting

Mark 13: 28-37

Today we come to the conclusion of Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse. Jesus had given much detail to the disciples regarding the end times and the Great Tribulation. He concluded this conversation with a challenge for them to be aware of the time, while diligently watching for the Lord to return.

The verses before us have been discussed and debated for centuries. Men continue to be divided regarding the timing of these events, and what will actually be involved when the Lord returns. I think we would all agree that no one possesses the wisdom to discern all that Jesus said, but one thing is certain – He will come again just like He said. As believers, we are responsible to watch and wait for the Lord's return. As we discuss this final passage in the Olivet Discourse, I think you will agree that we are nearing that day. The global stage is being set for the Lord to come again.

As we examine these [final insights](#) of Jesus, I was to consider the challenge of: [Watching and Waiting](#).

I. The Description of the End (28-32) – Here we discover a final description of the end times. Consider:

A. The Parable (28-29) – *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.* Jesus used a parable to describe how to know the end was near, so close that it was at the door. He spoke of a fig tree having tender branches, putting forth her leaves. Those who were familiar with fig trees knew that this was a sure sign that summer was near. Most agree, as do I, that Jesus referred to Israel as He spoke of the fig tree. She had been illustrated by a fig tree throughout Scripture. At this moment, Israel was occupied by the Romans. Clearly the disciples had no idea what was ahead for the nation. Looking back on history, we know Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman general Titus, in 70AD. Following the destruction of the city and the Temple, Israel (Judah) ceased to exist, and the Jews were scattered throughout the world.

- Centuries passed and Israel remained a memory in historical records. All of that changed on May 14, 1948 as Israel became a recognized, sovereign nation again. Most agree this is a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in the Olivet Discourse. The fig tree has developed tender branches and is putting forth her leaves.

B. The Promises (30-31) – *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.* Referring to the fig tree putting for her branches, Jesus made two distinct promises. The first promise deals with the timing of the end. Jesus declared that generation would not pass away until all the things He described in the Olivet Discourse came to pass. This promise has brought confusion to some. Clearly Jesus was not speaking of the generation that lived as He spoke these words. We are nearly 2,000 years removed from this prophecy, and the Lord has not returned. Some believe Jesus spoke of the generation that witnesses the fig tree putting forth her leaves. Even if we used the date of 1967 when Israel won the Six-Day War, we are already fifty-one years beyond that. There is no need for concern. There is another school of thought that makes sense to me. The word generation was often used to describe “*a particular race of people.*” Although Israel is a sovereign nation again, she has yet to embrace Jesus as the Messiah. They will not embrace Him as the Christ until He returns in power and great glory. While we cannot say with certainty exactly what Jesus described, we can know His return is very near. The fig tree is putting forth her leaves.

- Jesus also promised that although heaven and earth would pass away, His words would remain for eternity. We know by studying prophecy that there will be a new heaven and a new earth following the Millennial Reign. Generations have scoffed and denied the teachings of Christ, rejecting the Word of God. When all else has been consumed, the Word will endure. We would do well to heed the Word, watching and anticipating the coming of our Lord.

C. The Particulars (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.* While humanity can see events that point toward the soon return of Jesus, it is impossible for anyone to know exactly which day or hour the Lord will come. Predictions have abounded throughout the years. I have heard several in my lifetime. When these are proven false, the predictor always comes up with some excuse – a miscalculation in their math is most often used. Mankind does not and cannot know the day or the hour. That is reserved for the Father in heaven. Some argue that Jesus did not know Himself at that moment but may be aware of the time now that He is ascended back to the Father. I am not going to debate that, but one thing is certain – no man knows the day or the hour the Lord will come. We must watch and wait, anticipating His return at any moment.

II. The Expectation for the End (33-37) – Finally Jesus described the attitude of anticipation that we must have regarding His return. Consider:

A. The Attention (33) – *Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.* Jesus specifically admonished the disciples to take heed, watch and pray regarding the end, because

they had no way of knowing when that time would come. Would you not agree that if He expected the disciples to watch and pray, that we too are expected to do the same? As I survey the world scene, comparing it to what we know in Scripture, our Lord's return must be drawing near. We too must abide in prayer as we anticipate the return of our Lord.

B. The Preparation (34-35) – *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.* Jesus used another illustration to define the urgency of the time and the diligence required by those who followed Him. He knew He would soon depart from them, ascending back to the Father. He would soon leave His house, the church, in the care of the disciples and the believers who followed after them. Those in Christ were expected to make preparation for His return. This included being faithful to work He left for us to perform. We are now the hands, feet, and voice of the Lord. There is no time to waste. His return is near, even at the door. There are countless millions who have yet to hear and respond to the Gospel. We must be diligent in our labor as we continually watch for His return. We do not know when He will come; He may come tonight, or in the morning.

- These are challenging thoughts when we pause to consider their enormity. How many of us woke this morning thinking this could be the day the Lord would return? Have we gone about our daily affairs with the sobering realization that His return is at hand? Do we sense the urgency when we pass others in the way, unsure of their relationship with Christ? No doubt you would agree, we must make the necessary preparations as we watch and wait for His coming!

C. The Admonition (36-37) – *Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.* ^[37] *And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.* Jesus cautioned against finding believers asleep, unengaged in the work and failing to anticipate His coming when He returns. He will come as a thief in the night. There is no way to predict when He will come. Had the Lord returned this morning, would He have found us asleep or diligently watching for His return? I think we would have to admit that most of the time we are so busy living life, caught up in our own busy schedules, that we fail to look for His coming. Likely He would have found most of us asleep had He returned today. I hope this will open our hearts to the urgency of the time and create a compelling desire to watch for His return.

- Mark closed his account of the Olivet Discourse with a challenging word from our Lord – Watch! This was conveyed to the disciples and it was given for our admonition as well. There can be no doubt that our Lord is coming soon. If I wasn't confident of His coming, I would not be preaching today. I lack the wisdom to describe all that time will reveal, but I do know our Lord is coming. We must diligently watch as we labor and wait for His return!

Conclusion: As I prepared this message I was reminded of a game we played as children – hide and seek. We would always declare after we had finished counting – ready or not, here I come! This simple principle applies to our Lord return. Ready or not, He is coming! Are we fully prepared should that be today? Have we done all we know the Lord has asked us to do? Are we living out our faith and fulfilling the work we've received? Do you have a personal relationship with Christ? He may not come today, but then again, He might. When He returns, it will be too late to make any preparation or engage in work left undone.