

**THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**

Mark 13:24-37

**Intro:** One of the greatest of all of the tragedies of our present generation is the division that exists among true believers concerning the end times. Some believers believe that the Lord can come at any time to remove His church from the world. They are also called pre-tribulationists because they believe that the church will not go through the great tribulation, that the tribulation is the time of Jacob's trouble, designed for two purposes, to bring Israel back to the Lord and to judge the whole world. Others believe that the church will go through half of the Great Tribulation, and then be raptured. And then there are those who believe that the church will go through the whole seven years of the Great Tribulation, and then the Lord will come.

When it comes to the millennial reign of Christ on the earth, there are those who do not believe that there will be such a period. They are a millennialists. Others are called premillennialists because they believe that Christ will come to reign upon the earth at the beginning of a thousand year reign, which is what a millennium is. Still others believe that the Lord will come after the millennium, and they are called post-millennialists.

A pre-tribulation person will generally be a pre-millennialist. A post-tribulationist would generally be a pre-millennialist.. And so on and on it goes.

Have I confused you enough? Perhaps there can be one thing said about all of the different opinions that is good, and that is that it shows that there is a great deal of attention on the prophetic Word, which may be an indication that these things will shortly come to pass, that we are really in the last days.

But one of the bad effects is that it has caused many people to say, "If our pastors and Bible teachers and theologians can't agree on this subject, what hope do I have that I can understand it all?" And so they feel best if they leave it alone.

I have lived long enough to remember the days when churches would be packed for prophetic conferences, and where the truth of the Lord's return had a profound effect upon the lives of the people of God. And that is

certainly what it was designed to do. The early church in the NT was warned against worldly, unholy living, and, along with that, one of the greatest incentives given to us in the Bible for holy living, is the fact that the Lord's people were to live in the hope of Christ's return. The Apostle John speaking of that time when we will see the Lord face to face, went on to say, "And every man that hath this hope in Him," that is, in the coming of the Lord, "purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). If you believe that the Lord could come today, really believe it, it is going to affect the way you live. My life and your life will tell us if we are really looking for the Lord. You won't be doing what you would not want to be doing when the Lord comes. You won't want to have any relationship with any other person less than the Lord would want it to be, if the Lord could come at any time. Believing in the coming of the Lord will have an effect upon your politics. Man has made such a mess of things in the world, that it ought to be apparent to any thinking person that nothing short of the coming of the Lord can bring us out of our troubles. The Lord is our only hope. Until He we need to be busy living for the Lord and spreading the Gospel. The only One Who can change the heart of a terrorist is Jesus Christ. The only One Who can bring true pleasure to a sin-loving, pleasure-mad American, is Jesus Christ.

Just yesterday I was reading what G. Campbell Morgan said about Romans 14:14 where the Apostle Paul said:

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

In effect, he read it backwards and said that you can't have true joy until you have peace, and you can't have true peace, until you are declared righteous before God.

It is not wonder that Paul said, and we can say, that we are "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," meaning the Gentile.

When the Apostle John finished writing that book of The Revelation, what was his prayer? "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The book of the Revelation is not primarily a revelation of events. Read the very first words of the great prophetic book of the NT, and John himself gave the title. It is a "revelation of Jesus Christ." That is why he promised us a blessing if we would read it. The Bible was not given to us to divide us; it was given to make us what we are in Christ: ONE!

So as my first point what I believe with our handling of God's prophetic Word, and why we have so many divisions. Here it is:

**I. IN OUR STUDY OF PROPHECY WE HAVE CONCENTRATED ON EVENTS, NOT ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST.**

When you and I finish reading any book of the Bible, do we stop and ask ourselves, "What did this book teach me about Christ?" After the Lord was raised from the dead, on at least two occasions, He took believers through a study of the OT to point out what the OT had to say about Him. And two of them said afterwards to each other,

Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures? (Luke 24:32).

Physical heartburn is very uncomfortable, but spiritual heartburn is what we all ought to be praying for. That's what we will have when the Lord really opens the Word to us, and shows us Himself.

Is our main motivation in reading our Bible a desire to see the Lord, to learn more about Him, to love Him more, to trust Him more than we do? Or, has it become just a habit with us? Or are we just reading to keep up with our schedule? It seems like a difficult problem to do what the OT saints, set the Lord before them.

Now look at our text to see how Christ is going to be preeminent with all of us who will witness His coming to the earth. Here I would direct your attention to verses 24 through 27 of Mark 13.

As verse 24 begins, the Lord was anticipating the time when the terrible Tribulation is over. And notice what happens! "The sun shall be darkened." What next? "The moon shall not give her light? After that what? In verse 25 "the stars shall fall from heaven." And then? "The powers of heaven shall be shaken." This statement may be a summarization of all that is gone before. *Suddenly, before the coming of the Lord, the whole world will be plunged into total darkness!*

What would you think if suddenly as we meet here everything inside and out would be totally dark. The light would be gone, and there would be no light to shine even in darkness – no sun, no moon, no stars. This would be like a repetition of the darkness that enveloped the land of Egypt in the time of the plagues, although this darkness will be worldwide.

How long this will last, we are not told. It could be a very short time, or it could last for days. We do not know. But what we do know is that just as quickly as the darkness came, so the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ, arrives “in great power and glory.” And what happens? The whole world is filled with light from the very presence of Him Who is “the Light of the World.” None of us would know that that will even be literally true. But it will even carry over into the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Apostle John in his description of conditions in the eternal state, said:

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev. 21:22-23).

That was not the only time that the Apostle John had a glimpse of the glory of our Lord. He and James and John were with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration when the glory of the Lord was suddenly displayed before them. Later both Peter and John wrote about that experience that they had. When we read the words of the Psalmist that we are to give the Lord the glory due unto His Name, neither we nor they can possibly understand all that that means. The One Who came the first time into this world to be despised and rejected, is coming again, and when He does, He will outdate the sun, the moon, and the stars with the eternal display of His glory. Don't ask me how that will be, but let us enjoy this revelation, and look forward to that day when we will see the Lord in His glory. What a day that will be! And let us thank God that even in our day we have had glimpses of the radiant glory of Jesus Christ as we have learned of Him in the Word.

*So our main concern should not be upon when He is coming, but upon Who He is Who is coming! The event is extremely important, but the Person Who is coming far exceeds in glory the event. Let us not look forward just because there will be no sickness, no more pain, no more death and no more sorrow, but let us look forward to the eternal state because the Lord Jesus will be there, and we will be with Him, and amazingly, we will be like Him!*

And what will He do when He comes? He will gather His elect from all over the world, Jews and Gentiles. the great number of the redeemed who will come to Him during the Great Tribulation. The Lord is not going to be completely satisfied until all of His redeemed ones are with Him.

The next thing that the Lord did in speaking to His disciples, was to give them an illustration:

## **II. THE LEAFING OUT OF THE FIG TREE (Mark 13:28-31).**

The Old Testament saints looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. It was quite a while from the illustration given to Adam and Eve when the Lord took the skins of animals and clothed them, a type of salvation. But at last the Redeem came. It is has been over 2000 years since the Lord promised that He would come again, but day will come, first for His church, and then when He comes in glory.

So to emphasize the point that He was making, He told them that when they saw the branches of the fig tree tender, and putting out leaves, they knew that summer was about there. So when the people who are living in the Tribulation period see the signs of His coming, conditions, difficult conditions, the worst time the world will have ever seen, then they could know that the generation which saw them would not die until all God's promises relating to His coming would be fulfilled.

And to further stress the certainty that they would be fulfilled, God had it all written down. And the Lord added His promise that although the universe as we know it today, will pass away to be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, yet His Word, containing all of His promises written down, will never pass away. Many attempts have been made in the past to destroy the Word of God, but they have all failed. And many more will probably be made in the future, but they will fail too. The Lord made another prophetic statement here:

31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

In other words, the Lord was saying that there is nothing in all of the world that is as secure as the Bible, the Word of God. It is forever settled in heaven. See Psalm 119:89. If you want to have your faith in the Word of God strengthened, read Psalm 19 and Psalm 119. And read them over and over. The Word of God stands. It tells us what has happened. It tells us what is happening. And it tells us what is going to happen –not perhaps all that we would like to know, but all that we need to know.

Now I come to my last point.

## **III. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD AS WE**

**WAIT FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD (Mark 13:32-37).**

Whether we as the members of the body of Christ are waiting for Him to come to take us to heaven, or, in the coming day, when the saints of the Great Tribulation are waiting for His coming in glory, the word for all of us is, "Watch." It appears four times here in our English version although some of the more recent translations render it in other ways which actually mean the same thing. It is in verse 33, 34, 35, and 36. Our Lord used two different Greek verbs. The word in verse 33 is different from the word He used in 34, 35, and 36, but actually their meaning is about the same, and as in the KJV, most modern translation, although they may give a different word, or words, yet they translate them all the same.

The only uncertain thing about the coming of the Lord, is *when* it is to take place. No writer of Scripture gave us a date, or dates. No man or woman of God can set a date. The angels don't know when the Lord is coming. And the Lord said that even He did not know. I agree with those who know that as the Son of God the Lord Jesus was infinite in His wisdom, yet as the Son of man, we do not know to what extent the human nature of our Lord affected the Divine, just as we don't know how the Divine affected the human. What we can't understand, let us accept if the Lord said it, and marvel at the questions which can be raised with respect to the incarnation of our Lord.

But He told His disciples to "watch." This meant that they were not to go to sleep. It meant that they were to be on their guard. It meant that they were to anticipate the Lord's coming. And it meant that they were to keep busy as they awaited their Lord's return.

Paul used this word as he departed from the Ephesian elders:

- 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
- 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.
- 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.
- 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
- 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an

inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:28-32)  
One of Paul's parting words to the church at Corinth in his first epistle had to do with watching: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). And concluding his letter to the believers at Colosse. Paul said, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). And we find these words in 1 Thess. 5:5-8:

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

Finally, I give you these words from Peter in 1 Peter 5:6-11:

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant (watch); because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

**Concl:** You have heard what the Lord has commanded, not just recommended, but commanded, that we should do, in the light of the coming of the Lord. The big question is, *Will we do it? Or will we remember that we talked about the coming of the Lord, but forget that there is something for us to do. We can't do it faithfully in our own strength, but what the Lord commands us to do, He enables us to do. And so let us pray that we will not go to sleep in these evil days in which we live, but that we will be faithful in prayer, faithful in praying for ourselves that we will not be lulled to sleep by the allurements of the world, but so filled with the Word of God and by the Spirit of God that we will stand firmly in the place that the Lord has given to us, so that others watching us will be encouraged to be watchful themselves. Let us pray for each other. These are not the days for careless living, but days to watch.*

Let us pray that when our work on earth is done, if the Lord does not come before that time, that we will be able to say, by the grace of God, what Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8:

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing .

Let's not neglect this great truth. Let us not argue about it. But let us read about it, and pray about it, until we like Paul, learn to love the truth that Jesus is coming again.