

Gospel of Mark Chapter 13 – John Karmelich

1. Chapter 13 in effect, takes a one-chapter break from describing the major events of Jesus' final week on earth and focuses on the topic of Jesus' return. Let me ask the important question first: "Why should I care about this stuff?" In other words, we have enough problems to deal with in life than to spend time worrying about if and when Jesus is going to come back to earth.
 - a) Let me ask the same question a different way: If you knew you were going to die say, in the next 24 hours, how important would your problems be? Would you talk to those close to you the same way, if you knew that you only had one day left to live? The reason that three of the four gospels spend a good chapter focusing on "end times" events in the final week of Jesus life is not because this is when Jesus brought up the topic. It is because it is one of those things we have to understand in the big picture idea of what is important.
 - b) Here's another way to look at this: Did the disciples believe Jesus was going to come back in their lifetime? Yes, they probably did. Did Paul, who worked his great works roughly ten to thirty years after Jesus rose from the dead, believe that Jesus was going to come back during his lifetime? I'm sure he did. Here are you and I, roughly 2,000 years later, and should we live with the idea that Jesus could come back at anytime? The answer is to think, "Yes He can and yes, that is a possibility I should live with".
 - i) This leads us back to the issue of the moment, which is pondering the importance of our eternal destiny. Yes, the problems we have to deal with now won't magically go away just because we are thinking about God. At the same time, having the "big picture idea" of eternity in focus, does give us a sense of understanding how significant are our problems in comparison to eternity.
 - c) In summary, it is important to know this stuff, not so we can go stand around and wait for Jesus to show up. It is important to recognize the signs of Jesus coming so we can remember what is really important in life. Equally as important as believing that Jesus came into the world to die for our sins, is to understand that Jesus will come again to "wrap up the world" as we know it. Having faith is not just believing that Jesus died for our sins, but also to remember that He has a wonderful future for those of us who follow Him and trust in Him in both this life and the next one.
2. Ok, time for disclaimers. ☺ If I had to describe the most controversial chapter of Mark, this is it. If I had to pick which chapter scholars debate over the most, this is it.
 - a) In the world of Christian scholars, most believe that either 1) Jesus comes back to gather the church before a final seven-year period known as the "tribulation"; or 2) Jesus comes back only at the end of the tribulation to gather all remaining believers or 3) Jesus just comes back to wrap things up and the "tribulation" covers the last 2,000 years of history and counting.
 - i) I happen to hold view #1. My point here is that if you hold a different view, it's ok to disagree. My favorite joke to those who disagree is, "Don't worry about, we will explain the correct view of the end times on the way up to heaven. ☺"
 - ii) For now, just understand that people who know their bible well disagree on just how the end time events exactly happen. While Christians generally agree that Jesus will return, there is debate over how those things will "play out". Since Jesus is describing future events, it is the details Christians argue over.
 - b) Personally, I find the most mistakes people make in understanding end time events come when people take a few verses of the bible out of context as opposed to studying all of the scripture on this topic to come to a proper understanding of end time events.

3. The good news for this lesson is that I am not planning on going over every biblical scripture on the topic of end time events.
 - a) If this topic is new to you, I usually recommend studying the last four verses of Daniel Chapter 9. That is probably the best summary of end-time events in the bible.
 - b) The focus of this study is on the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 13. Remember that Mark wrote his gospel primarily to a non-Jewish audience. Even though a lot of end time events do focus around the nation of Israel, this is something that Mark thought was important enough for a non-Jewish audience to understand and to ponder.
 - c) With all of that said, my goal is not to get you so paranoid so that you stand outside of your home looking for Jesus to return. My hope is to get all of us to understand and remember that the events described in this chapter can happen at any time. Because they could happen at any time, we should focus our lives on being "busy for Christ".
 - i) Let me put this another way: If we working in an office building, would we work harder if our boss were standing over our shoulders? If we knew the boss could walk past us at any time and then say, hand us a bonus based on how hard we are working, would that keep us motivated to do our job properly?
 - ii) In a sense, that is what this chapter is about. It is to remember that Jesus could return at any time or that our life could end at any time. What is important in the big scheme of things is that we live to make a difference for Christ in all we do. The world as we know it, could end at any time, be it our unforeseen death or Jesus coming back. That should be a strong motivating factor to remember what is important in the long run and live to make a difference for Jesus in all that we do.
4. OK, so what is the title for this lesson? It is the word "watch". It is about understanding what is important about Jesus Second Coming and why we should live our lives in effect, watching for this event to occur. With that said, it's time to begin Verse 1.
5. Verse 1: As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" ² "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."
 - a) Try to picture a big skyscraper, say like the twin towers that fell on "9-11" in New York City. Now picture that structure destroyed quickly, where nothing is left of it. That in effect is what Jesus is saying about the temple structure that existed in Jerusalem at that time. Understand that this was a big and expensive building structure.
 - i) The Temple wasn't just a room where priests went inside to pray to God. It was a series of buildings built on a hillside. The only thing left of those buildings today is part of the foundation wall, which today is called the "wailing wall".
 - b) Jesus is predicting something that came literally true about forty years after He died and rose again. The fact that none of the gospels record the actual destruction of the temple is pretty good evidence that the gospels were all written before that destruction took place.
 - i) Let me discuss the destruction a little further: Around forty years after Jesus, the Romans got tired of the Jewish people rebelling against Rome. The Romans decided to attack and level Jerusalem. It is estimated a million people died in this campaign. The temple itself was dismantled "stone by stone" so the Romans could capture the gold that was part of this structure.
 - c) Now let's get back to the text. Jesus was with his disciples and they were leaving the temple area. One of the disciples pointed out how magnificent this structure is, and Jesus responds in effect with "Not one stone will be left upon another".
 - i) That statement by Jesus had to be a shock to the disciples. The Jewish people expected the Messiah to rule the world from Jerusalem and specifically from the temple located on this temple mount. Therefore, for Jesus to say that the Temple structure will be destroyed, is a denial of what the Jewish people of that day were expecting the long promised "Messiah" to do.

6. Verse 3: As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"
- a) A lot of study bibles have a title for this chapter called the "Olivet Discourse". I could have easily stolen that title, but that would be too easy. ☺ It is called by that title because it takes place on the Mount of Olives (a hillside area overlooking the Temple Mount).
 - i) The word "discourse" just means it was a speech given by Jesus.
 - b) So anyway, here is Jesus, with four of his disciples, sitting somewhere on this mountain and the four disciples ask Jesus a two-part question. The answer to that question takes up the remainder of the chapter.
 - i) If nothing else, the answer Jesus gives is the longest answer Jesus gives in the Gospel of Mark (a book known for its brevity). Jesus' answer was important enough that Peter didn't forget it and told it to Mark, many years later. Remember that Peter was Mark's source for this gospel. Of the four apostles who sat with Jesus, Mark (through Peter) is the only eyewitness who recorded Jesus' response.
 - c) Now, let's discuss the disciple's questions: The first question is (essentially), "When will this happen?" Remember that Jesus is describing the destruction of the temple. The second question is (essentially) "What signs will happen to warn people prior to this event actually taking place?"
 - i) Notice that neither of the questions dealt with the issue of when Jesus is to return and rule the world. That thought is implied, but it is not asked directly. As we begin Jesus' answer to those questions, notice that Jesus tackles the underlying question of His return as part of the answer that is given in this chapter.
 - d) Before we begin Jesus' answer to these questions, let me also remind you of the "Jewishness" of Jesus response. We need to remember that Jesus was born into a Jewish family and is speaking to a group of disciples that were all Jewish. Even though Mark's Gospel is written for the non-Jewish reader, the "Jewish" aspect has to be kept in mind as we go through Jesus' actual answer to these questions. I'll explain this concept in more detail later in this lesson.
7. Verse 5: Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many.
- a) Jesus starts the speech with a warning. The warning is in effect, that many will come claiming to be the "Messiah".
 - i) I read of a Jewish-Christian historian who said that in the forty (or so) years between the time of Jesus resurrection and the time the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, there were dozens of people who claimed to be the Messiah. The Romans essentially killed all of them in their attempt to overthrow the Romans.
 - b) The danger today is many claim they are the "savior" of the world. There are lots of false religious leaders and false political leaders claiming that they are "the one" who will lead the people (be it a country or an empire or the world) into a state of everlasting peace.
 - i) The English term today is called "The Messiah Syndrome". That is said usually when a political leader thinks they are going to save their people.
 - c) Jesus main point here is that when people claim in effect, "They are the one" who will lead them to peace or prosperity, don't believe them. When (not if) Jesus does come back, there will be a bunch of signs prior to that event. All of those signs must be obvious for Jesus' return to happen. In the meantime, we should treat all other religious and political leaders who claim to have all the answers with a "grain of salt" and remember that God can bring them down just as quickly as He allowed them to rise up. That is why Jesus begins and ends this one chapter speech in effect with the word "watch". We are to watch for His return and watch out for false prophets who claim they are Him. We can use the events described in the bible to tell the difference between "Him" and false prophets.

8. Verse 7: When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁸ 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.
- a) To give you an example tied to these verses, there was a religious cult who was positive Jesus was going to come right after World War I, as many nations rose up against other nations at that time. Similar predictions were made right after World War II as well.
 - b) The one thing to get out these verses is that the time leading up to Jesus second coming does begin with both wars and "rumors of wars" (See Verse 7). That does not mean Jesus will come the moment the wars are over or in the middle of such battles. It just means that such wars are the first of the "season of signs" that begins the "end time" events.
 - c) In order to explain my personal view of this, it is time for a quick background explanation of a seven-year period of time Christians call "The Tribulation".
 - i) As I said in the introduction, the best background study to go with this topic is to study the last four verses of Daniel Chapter 9. To make it short, God told Daniel in Chapter 9 that there will be seventy "sevens" for the Nation of Israel prior to the coming of the Messiah. That term "seven" can mean seven days, weeks or seven years. In this case, it means seven years. The first sixty-nine of those seventy sevens (period of seven years) literally and perfectly tie to Jesus' first coming. My point here is that there is a time gap between the first sixty-nine "sevens" and final seven-year period. The final period of seven years occurs before Jesus' return.
 - ii) So why is there a gap between the first sixty-nine "sevens" and the final "seven"?
 - a) Understand that time gaps are common in the bible. When Jesus started His public ministry he was in a synagogue and quoted from Isaiah. When Jesus read that quote, He stopped on a comma. (See Luke 4:17-19 and Isaiah 61:1-2 on this.) That comma in effect, has lasted 2,000 years as the rest of Isaiah's sentence has to do with events of Jesus' second coming.
 - b) My point here is that the Old Testament often has allusions to events about Jesus First and Second coming and often those predictions are together.
 - iii) With all of that said, the final seven year period (as described in Daniel Chapter 9), is describing some future time period which occurs right before Jesus returns.
 - a) Here is where Christian scholars disagree. Some argue that the final seven year period is not literally seven years but a "figure of speech" and is somehow tied to the last two-thousand years (and counting) of history.
 - b) My response to that 2,000-year view is that when Daniel quoted another prophet (Jeremiah), he took that prediction literally and not figuratively. Daniel read a prediction made by Jeremiah that Israel would be in captivity to Babylon for exactly seventy years. (See Jeremiah 25:7 and Daniel 9:2). Daniel did not say that seventy-year period was a figure of speech, but took it literally. That is why I take bible predictions literally.
 - iv) For those who take do take the seven year period literally, there are some who believe that Christians living at that time go to heaven after the seven year period is about over. There are others (like me) who hold the view that Christians living at the start of that period are somehow taken up to heaven prior to this seven year period starting. That "going up to heaven" issue is commonly called the rapture.
 - d) It would help to know that the concept of the Christian church was hidden in the Old Testament. (See Ephesians 5:32.) God told Daniel that there are seventy "sevens" just for Israel. (See Daniel 9:24.) Since God said these seventy "sevens" are for Israel (and not the church), my view is the church is "out of here" before this final "seven" begins. I believe people are saved during this final seven-year period, but those who are saved in that time era are a separate "category" from the church.

- e) Confused? OK, let me try to simplify all of this. When Jesus says, "wars and rumors of wars" I believe He is talking about a specific time period right before He comes back. It means that such wars as described here in the Gospel of Mark are a set of signs to watch out for that Jesus is coming back soon.
 - f) This leads us back to Verses 7 and 8. The verses say, "Nation will rise against nation" and "kingdom against kingdom". In other words, it will not just be one established country fighting another. It will be, as they say on the news "A civil uprising". It will include for example, a nationality within a country rebelling against that government. In other words it could include a group within a country fighting the leadership of that country.
 - g) Verse eight also mentions earthquakes in various places. I was born and raised in California where earthquakes are a part of life. If Jesus just said there will be earthquakes in places that "get earthquakes" that would not be a sign from God. However, if there were earthquakes all over the world, that would be a sign from God. Those who study such things claim the last century had more earthquakes than any time in recorded history. Grant it, our data today is probably better than history.
 - i) The point Jesus is making here is that a sign prior to His Second Coming is lots of earthquakes not just where they normally occur, but all over the "place".
 - h) The final sign will be famines all over the world. Famines are common in times of war. My personal guess is because of the needs of armies, there will be food shortages. Jesus did not say how there would be famines, just that they would happen at this time.
 - i) Let me put all of this together: Jesus is teaching that the way to recognize that He is coming back soon is there will lots of wars, earthquakes and famines all over the "place".
 - i) So what does that mean for us? Does we panic if see something like this? No, it just means that Jesus is "due back soon" when all of these things start to happen.
 - ii) Let's remember why Jesus is teaching all of this. It is so His disciples, and the readers of the bible can tell the difference between when Jesus is actually coming in the world and when false "messiah's" rise and fall.
 - j) So, does all of this mean that if a bunch of earthquakes happen around the world and at the same time, lots of rumors of wars and actual battles happen between countries and between "factions" in a country, Jesus is coming soon? (Oh, and don't forget famines. ☺)
 - i) The truth is we don't know for sure until it happens. I do believe all of these signs have to happen fairly quickly around the same time period before Jesus returns.
 - k) Remember that Jesus calls on us to be a good witness for Him even during the times such as these. The way we wait for Jesus is not just to stand still looking up, but to be "busy" doing the things God wants us to do. If you are not sure what that is, ask God for guidance, and I'm positive He will lead you down the path He wants for your life.
 - l) With all of that out of my head, I can actually move on to Verse 9 now. ☺
9. Verse 9: "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.
- a) I stated earlier that when one reads this chapter, one must remember that Jesus was born into a Jewish family and spoke to Jewish disciples. Therefore, some of the signs of His coming are focused either on Israel or on the Jewish people. Even us "non-Jews" need to understand that fact when we read of the events of Jesus' second coming.
 - b) The reason I emphasize that here is because Verse 9 says a sign of Jesus coming back is that Christians will be "flogged in the synagogues". Let's face it, not a lot of Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians spend a lot of time in synagogues. I visualize this part of the verse with Jewish Christians trying to convince the Jews people of a synagogue that Jesus is the Messiah and that Christian is then punished in the synagogue for being a "false teacher".
 - i) The term "flogged in the synagogue" was literally a form of punishment in ancient Israel where someone who violated the law would be whipped.

- c) For those of us who see all of this as a future event, I see Jewish converts to Christianity working hard to try to convert other Jewish people. Those Christian-Jewish evangelists get "rewarded" for their efforts by being physically punished in synagogues.
- d) There are some who argue that these verses only apply to first century Christian-Jews who like Paul traveled from synagogue to synagogue trying to convince Jewish people that Jesus is the Messiah. Paul also stood before governors and kings.
 - i) It is time to remember that "prophecy" often has double fulfillments. Dr. J. Vernon McGee, a famous 20th Century bible radio teacher, said that prophets often (figuratively speaking) saw a great set of mountains off in the distance. What they don't see was a great valley in the middle of those mountains. What he meant was bible predictions often have a "short-term" and "long term" vision in mind. That means there was a short term fulfillment of that prophecy, which often validates the prophet as legitimate and a long term fulfillment of that prophecy as well.
 - ii) Let me give an example: The prophet Ezekiel (36:11) predicted that one day God would once again establish the nation of Israel. He made that prediction while the Israelites were literally in captivity (a thousand miles away) in Babylon. In the "short-term" prediction came true as 70 years after the Jewish people were taken captive, their descendants were allowed to travel back home again.
 - a) However, even after the 70-year captivity, the nation of Israel was now part of the Persian Empire. After that, they were part of the Greek Empire and then the Roman Empire. They were never an independent country again with self-rule until the 1940's. Therefore, Ezekiel's "short term" prediction came true after the 70-years of captivity. Ezekiel's "long term" prediction came literally true in the 1940's.
 - iii) My point as it ties to the Gospel of Mark, is that bible predictions often have double fulfillments. In the "short term", this prediction by Jesus about persecution in synagogues came true fairly soon after Jesus rose from the dead.
 - a) I also see a long-term fulfillment of this prediction in that whenever the "end-times" actually occurs, there will be specific Jewish people called by God to be His witnesses (evangelists). Revelation Chapter 7 speaks of 144,000 "Jewish witnesses" for Jesus. I believe that ties to this prediction made here in the Gospel of Mark about persecution in synagogues.
- e) OK John, I'm not Jewish. Why should I care about these Jewish Christians? Remember the main point is to understand the signs that lead to Jesus second coming. One of those signs is Christian-Jewish people suffering in Jewish synagogues.
 - i) Now wait a minute John, haven't Christian people from Jewish backgrounds had to suffer throughout the last 2,000 years as their fellow Jews put them down? Yes that is true. That is why some Christians do see the last 2,000 years as one big "stretch" of the final seven-year period. My personal view is that this type of action will intensify during the final seven-year period.
- f) This leads us back to the verses. Jesus uses the term "you" in these verses. Some of the original disciples did suffer while preaching Jesus to fellow Jews. Paul, who was not one of the 12 original apostles did suffer for preaching in synagogues and did preach to political leaders in that day and time. How do we know these verses are not just talking about the events after Jesus died and rose again?
 - i) The short answer is Jesus has not come back yet. Again, while one can read these verses applying to the time right after Jesus or applying to the last 2,000 years of history, the "purpose" of Jesus speech in this chapter is to warn us of what the signs will look like right before Jesus coming. One of the signs will be Christian from Jewish backgrounds suffering in synagogues and preaching to world leaders.

10. Verse 10: And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.
- a) The first question one should ask about this verse is "who are the nations"? Does that mean Jesus will not come until every last group of people on earth has heard the gospel? Even if Christians do accomplish that goal, what about the next generation of people?
 - b) My view of the "nations" is that when God uses the term "nations", He is referring to the descendants of the "70 nations" listed in Genesis Chapter 10. In other words, at least some representatives of each of those nations will hear of Jesus prior to His coming.
 - i) So what does that mean? It means Christianity spread quickly in the first few centuries after Jesus. I am convinced that descendants of all those original nations have now heard the Gospel message. It means that at least one person from every one of the original seventy nations has by now heard the Gospel message.
 - ii) There is a group of Christian missionaries called the Gibeonites. They have been around for over 100 years and it is their mission that every person must hear the gospel message. It is my view that 1) they are doing a good thing and 2) it is not necessary for every last group of people to have heard the gospel prior to the second Coming of Jesus. In other words, Jesus can return at any time.
 - c) Think of it this way: When Jesus first spoke to the disciples, no one, outside a minority of Israelites have heard of Jesus. Jesus is telling the disciples that He will not return until "word of Him" has spread to throughout the world.
 - d) So how is this a sign of Jesus coming in the future, if that message has been spread to all "nations" for many centuries now? OK, here is where I'm going to get weird (as if you haven't come to that conclusion already in this lesson. ☺). The book of Revelation speaks not only of 144,000 Jewish witnesses for Jesus, but also of an angel spreading the word about Jesus prior to His returning (Revelation 8:13).
 - i) Therefore, I see the "future signs" of referring to these 144,000 Jewish "evangelists" and some sort of angelic being that the whole world sees, preaching about Jesus in the "end times". The point is these things do occur some time shortly before Jesus' Second Coming. I believe it will be obvious whenever that "time" is.
11. Verse 11: 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.
- a) This verse says in effect that if you are arrested in effect for being a Christian and you have a chance to speak in your defense, do not worry about one is going to say at the trial. The Spirit of God will guide us as to what we are to say at that trial.
 - b) There are some who take this verse out of context and say it is not necessary to learn one's bible, as God will guide them in times of trial. What this verse is saying is that when times of persecution occur, and if a Christian has the right to speak in their defense, then the Holy Spirit will guide us as to what to say in that moment of time.
 - c) Like the other verses in this chapter, we can read these in "historical context, present or future context" and still have ways where they fit. There have been historical periods where Christianity was illegal. That is true in parts of the world today just as it was in the early periods of the Roman Empire.
 - d) When reading this verse, we still need to read it in context of the question asked of Jesus back in the first few verses of this chapter.
 - i) That is why I hold the view that the "tribulation" is a future, literal seven-year period. During that period, God will still have His "specific witnesses" in the world. During that time, Jewish witnesses for Jesus will be beaten in synagogues and some of these witnesses will get to speak before leaders at their trials.
 - ii) Again the issue of the moment is how do we tell when Jesus comes back? One answer is prior to His return, we will hear of such beatings and trials. I believe one reason Jesus has waited 2,000 years, is that now in the era of satellite television, the whole world would learn quickly of such events when they occur.

12. Verse 12: "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ¹³ All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.
- a) Another sign that the time of Jesus' return is close is that there will be major splits in families over Christianity. I was trying to think, "What would make someone hate their family members so much that they would want to turn them in?"
 - i) All I could think of, is that there is coming a time when Christianity is illegal and family members would turn them in to save their own lives. I can sort of see a mother pleading with her child in effect, "Please don't talk about Jesus. I don't want the authorities coming to our house. Please stop it so I don't have to arrest you in order to save the lives of everyone else in this house".
 - b) For this to be a specific end time event, there are two possibilities: The first is that God is speaking only about Israel and that to believe in any religion other than Judaism for Jewish people becomes a death sentence. While that is possible, it is not part of the Jewish culture to kill family members they disagree with. They may "argue to death", but to kill because one's family member holds a different religion is not part of Judaism.
 - i) I personally see this as some future time where a world leader says in effect, "All roads lead to God" and it is a crime to believe that there is only one way to God through one specific religion". Whenever that occurs, that would be a sign that the return of Jesus is "sometime soon". Either that, or maybe Islam becomes so dominant in the world, that Christianity becomes a crime.
 - c) One final comment on this verse. It says that, "all men will hate you". That does not mean that every Christian and non-Christian will hate you. It refers to a time when all who don't believe in Jesus Second Coming are under the influence of some great world leader who says in effect, "the way to God is through me, and not through some else (like say Jesus or some other spiritual guru".
13. Verse 14: "When you see `the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong--let the reader understand
- a) The term "abomination that causes desolation" in this verse is a specific term from the book of Daniel. If you thought I was out in "left field" by tying all of this end time stuff to the book of Daniel, I have Verse 14 as my support of that issue. That term is found in Daniel 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11. The English term varies, depending upon one's translation.
 - i) That term "abomination that causes desolation" refers to a false world leader going into the temple, declaring he is a god and demanding to be worshipped.
 - ii) In the 2nd Century B.C., there was a Greek emperor who went into the Jewish temple, and declared that he was a god. That started a great Jewish rebellion that was successful for a while, but eventually lost out to a Greek army.
 - iii) Jesus point is that this event will happen again, as Jesus is speaking two centuries after that 2nd Century B.C. event occurred and declares this to be a future event.
 - b) For those of us, who take this literally, it can't happen unless 1) Israel is a country again and 2) the Temple is rebuilt so this coming future world leader can go into that temple.
 - i) So since there is no official central temple in Jerusalem today, does that mean Jesus cannot come back now? No, because that temple could be rebuilt in the first half of that seven year time period. Daniel Chapters 9 and 11 says the "bad stuff" (i.e., wars) really starts in the second half of that seven-year period. In literally the middle of that seven-year period is when the coming world leader declares he is a god and demands to be worshipped from that future (to us) Jewish temple.
 - c) Notice it says "reader" in this verse. Mark understood that this message is not for just for Jesus disciples, but it is for all people. The whole point of this chapter is for the reader to recognize just when the signs of Jesus Second Coming are to take place.
 - d) At this point, we can pick up speed and discuss more than one verse at a time.

14. Verse 14 (cont.): --then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let no one on the roof of his house go down or enter the house to take anything out. ¹⁶ Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. ¹⁷ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ¹⁸ Pray that this will not take place in winter, ¹⁹ because those will be days of distress unequaled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now--and never to be equaled again.
- a) Let us again remember that Jesus has a Jewish heritage and is speaking to Jewish disciples. Here in Verse 14, it says that if and when you see these events happen, and you happen to be in Israel when it happens (Judea is "Southern Israel"), the point is one should flee for his or her life as if you don't have a moment to spare.
 - i) Yes, the Gospel of Mark is written for a non-Jewish audience, but we as non-Jews still need to understand what are the signs that Jesus is come back soon. One of those signs is a future world leader in the Jewish temple and claiming to be God.
 - ii) When that happens, those who are in that area are to act like "fugitives". They are to not stop to collect any belongings, but just flee that area as fast as possible.
 - b) Verse 17 says that this will be a bad time for pregnant women and nursing mothers. If a woman is pregnant or nursing, they still have to flee for their lives, but it is harder to run as now they have to worry about their babies as well.
 - i) By the way, if you ever wondered how Jesus feels about the abortion issue, consider the fact that Jesus warns how dangerous this time is for pregnant women. In that sense, this verse says, Jesus does care about unborn babies.
 - c) Verse 18 says that we are to pray that this event does not take place in winter. That is because in winter, it is harder to travel due to snowy conditions.
 - i) I am fascinated by the fact that Jesus tells us (the reader) to pray for this event. There are actually few things in the Gospels that Jesus specifically tells us to pray for, with this event being one of them. This alone tells us 1) Jesus does not know the day nor the hour it will happen and 2) we Christians can somehow influence when this event will take place by praying about it.
 - d) There are some bible scholars who argue that Jesus is just talking about the time, roughly 40 years after Jesus resurrection where Rome destroyed Jerusalem and roughly one million Jews died. As bad as that event was, I don't believe Jesus was talking about that for no other reason than the fact that Jesus did not return after that event took place.
 - i) So is Jesus being cruel by saying this event will happen? It is more like the concept that Jesus is aware of all of human history and is warning those that live in that area at that time that they must flee and not stop to get anything.
15. Verse 20: 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. ²¹ At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. ²² For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect--if that were possible.
- a) Verse 20 says, " If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive". Translation: The events of this time are so catastrophic, that if God didn't have a specific time line in mind, everyone would die from this event. As I have stated earlier, I believe this refers to the final seven-year period that is the main topic of the Book of Revelation.
 - b) Remember that Jesus is describing all of these events so that His followers would know exactly when these events take place. I believe that whenever this seven-year period happens, it will be worse (war-wise) than any period in human history.
 - c) The final part of these verses has Jesus warning us to beware of anyone calling themselves "The Christ" or a false prophet trying to deceive people.
 - i) One can imagine that if worldwide bad thing is happening, a lot of "nut cases" are going to be walking around claiming to be Jesus or a prophet sent by God. People living at this time are going to want answers to whatever is going on, and many will follow such false teachers and false leaders.

- d) With that said, notice something said in Verse 22: "to deceive the elect--if that were possible". That phrase tells me a couple of things:
- i) It means there are people who are saved during this time period. Notice they are called the "elect". There are many, like me who believe that those who are saved during this seven-year time are a different "classification" in heaven than the Christian church. There are others who argue that people who get saved during this time are simply part of the church (i.e., they are saved Christians too).
 - ii) If one is trusting in Jesus as both God and Lord of their lives, then such a person cannot be deceived by whatever claims are being made by false prophets and false "Christ's". Just exactly what these false entities say to deceive people, I don't know, and frankly I don't worry about it. I figure that if I'm trusting in Jesus, even if I have to live through such a terrible time, I am protected from these false "entities" as God says that the "elect" (i.e., the saved) are safe from such deception.
16. Verse 23: So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.
- a) Jesus in effect ends this speech with a reminder to be on your guard. So the question is "to be on our guard" for what? The answer is Jesus Second coming.
 - b) The second part of this verse says in effect that Jesus has told us everything we need to know about the signs of His Second Coming.
 - i) Let us remember one key thing: There have been a lot of historical events that fit one or more of the things Jesus described in this chapter, and yet, Jesus has not yet returned to earth. That tells us that the previous "signs" were not signs simply based on the fact Jesus has not come back yet.
 - c) OK, so then, what do we watch out for? The answer is all of the signs happening in a short time span of each other. Remember that Jesus said that such things as wars and earthquakes in various places are all signs that things are about to happen "together".
 - d) It might help to remember what is our motivation. It is that Jesus calls on us to keep an eye out for His Second Coming. I believe it is the job of every Christian in every generation to live with that possibility. Yes, I believe it could happen today, as I believe Paul had that same hope about two thousand years ago.
 - i) Personally, I think we are close to the "end times" simply because after almost 1,900 years the nation of Israel is back in the land again.
 - ii) Let's say I'm wrong. Let's say Jesus is not scheduled to come back for another 500 years. If that's the case, I'll shrug my shoulders and still go about the business of making a difference for Christ knowing that a day is coming when He will return.
 - iii) In summary, Jesus calls on His disciples (and us) to watch for the signs of His coming. It is to remember that life as we know it, could always end any day, be it by our untimely death or be it by the return of Jesus. Either way, it is a motivation to be busy doing God's will for our life until our final day comes.
 - e) Meanwhile I still have eleven more verses to go in this chapter.
17. Verse 24: "But in those days, following that distress, " `the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' ²⁶At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.
- a) Just when you think this chapter can't get any weirder, it does. ☺
 - b) Jesus says in these verses that after all of the signs (e.g., the wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, etc.) then (notice the then) the sun and the moon will both be darkened, there will be no stars in the sky, the "heavens" (i.e., the sky) will be shaken and then and only then will Jesus come back.
 - i) Does that mean the stars and the sun and the moon will literally disappear or does it just mean it is going to get so dark out, we can't see those things? Personally I don't know and I don't care. The point is the whole world gets so dark that no one on earth can see anything in the sky, that is the day when Jesus returns.

- c) Every now and then a "nut" will come along claiming to be Jesus, or someone claims they have seen Jesus and say He is living "over there". I know that is not true simply based on these verses of the bible. When Jesus does come back, I believe that somehow, someday the whole world will see the event.
 - d) Here is how I suspect (i.e., my theory) this will happen: I suspect that if the whole world is pitch dark, all people will look at their televisions or computers looking for answers. Then, somehow, the whole world will see Jesus return via satellite feed. I may be wrong on the details, but that is how I am sure Jesus has not already returned, as such an event has never happened.
18. Verse 27: 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.
- a) This verse is saying that whenever Jesus returns, He will send His angels and gather His people from the ends of the world. The "four winds" is simply a colorful expression of saying that Jesus will gather His followers from everywhere on earth.
 - b) This verse (supposedly supports the view that Christians living then do not get "raptured" until after all the seven year tribulation is essentially over. That is because this verse says that Jesus gathers His people after all the "bad stuff of this chapter " is over with.
 - i) Those of us who believe the church is gone before all of this "bad stuff" happens, simply believe there are two groups: One who gets saved prior to the final seven year period and those who get saved and are alive at the end of this time period.
 - ii) Those that argue that the "seven year tribulation" is a figure of speech to describe the last 2,000 years and counting of human history simply hold the view that Jesus comes back when He comes back and that's that.
 - iii) There, I've now given the major views on this, now you decide who is right. ☺
19. Verse 28: "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. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁰ I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
- a) First, the good news: I'm not going to compare the Nation of Israel to a fig tree here. ☺
 - b) To explain what Jesus is saying, think of it this way: Suppose there are no calendars to indicate the time of the year. How would one know what season it is? The answer for an Israelite is to look at fig trees. Their leaves blossom in late spring. If one sees fig trees with leaves blossoming, one knows it is late spring and that summer is coming soon.
 - c) Jesus point is that just as you would know summer is approaching by the blossoming of a fig tree. In a similar idea, you would know Jesus is coming back soon if you saw all of these signs happening as described in this chapter.
 - d) Verse 30 says, "This generation will not pass away until all of these things happen". What does that mean? It means all of these signs will happen in the span of a single generation. If that's true, wouldn't Jesus be describing the destruction of Jerusalem forty years after His resurrection? The short answer is no, as Jesus didn't come back right after that event.
 - i) I believe the reason Jesus made that statement (in my humble opinion) is to prove that the seven-year "tribulation" period is a literal seven years and not a "figure of speech" that spans over the last 2,000 years of history and still counting.
 - ii) In other words, the reason most bible scholars take the view that Jesus says the tribulation is literally a seven-year period is because Jesus makes the prediction that all of these events (of this chapter) happen in the span of a single generation.
 - iii) Well since Israel is a country again, has that time span started? I would argue "No" in that I'm not positive Israel "being in the land" is by itself one of the signs of His coming. Whenever this series of events occur, my view is that it will be obvious and all these events will happen within the span of a single generation.

20. Verse 32: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ 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.
- a) There are two important things to get out of these verses. The first is that only God the Father knows the date and hour of Jesus' Second Coming. Somehow Jesus back then did not know the date or the hour of His Second Coming. No angel knows that date either.
 - i) Why is that important? That is because if a person claims an angel told them when Jesus is going to return, we should not believe them.
 - ii) When a person says they figured out from studying the bible when Jesus returns, don't believe them as Jesus says that no one, including Himself, knows the date.
 - iii) The point is only God the Father knows and He is not saying when it is.
 - b) The second key point is simply to be on our guard, as we don't know when Jesus will return. By the way, this is one reason I happen to believe the church will be taken up into heaven (called the rapture) prior to all the events of this chapter. Let me explain:
 - i) In the book of Daniel, we can learn the exact day of Jesus return simply by counting exactly three and one half years from when the exact date when the antichrist enters the Jewish temple and claims to be God. (See Daniel 12:11.)
 - ii) Therefore my view is that Christians should watch for the signs that these things are coming soon and that we are "out of here" before they start. If one does not accept Jesus until after this time frame begins, they too need to watch for Jesus return and can start counting the seven year period. Even if we don't know when is "Day 1" of the seven year period, we can know when the half way point begins as that is the day the antichrist enters the Jewish Temple and demands to be worshipped as God. Exactly three and one half years later is Jesus' return.
 - c) Let me end this by putting it this way: Whether we are waiting for the day the Christian Church will be taken to heaven or waiting for the day that Jesus actually returns, the point is not so much when the actual day occurs, the point is Jesus wants us to watch for these events. As I have stated in this lesson, that does not mean we sit around and wait for Jesus to show up. It means we stay busy doing what God calls us to do and be a witness for Him until the unknown day of either our death or Jesus return.
21. Verse 35: 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. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!" "
- a) Jesus is not literally talking about a thief coming in the house. He is talking about the day (or the events surrounding His return). For most of the world that doesn't care about the second coming of Jesus, that event will be like a "thief in the night" in that their life will suddenly come to an end and they will realize how they have "blown their lives" by not living it to make a difference for God.
 - b) For those of us who are waiting and watching for Jesus return, it will not be a shock to us.
 - c) Let me end this lesson with a cute story about two priests playing a racquetball game. ☺
 - i) One Christian priest says to the other, "What would you do if you knew Jesus was going to come back in one hour? The other says, "Finish my racquetball game".
 - ii) The priest who said, "I will finish my game" is confident that he has lived his life to make a difference for Jesus and believes Jesus can come back at any moment.
 - iii) Jesus is not against rest or recreation if we are living to make a difference for Him. In other words, it is ok if Jesus comes back in the middle of the night or say, while we are going to the bathroom. The key is, if we are living to make a difference for Him, we should not be worry that Jesus could come back any moment.
 - iv) There, now that I have you all paranoid, I can end this lesson. ☺

22. Let's pray: Father, may our entire lives be pleasing to You. If there are areas of our lives that You know are not pleasing to You, help us to have the strength to overcome those issues. Guide us and show us how we can live our lives to make a difference for You in all that we do. Help us to remember that Jesus can return at any time or that we can die at any time, and that should not be a cause of panic, but a cause of celebration. Since we don't know how much time we have on earth, help us to use what time we do have, to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.