

Gospel of Mark: - Jesus is Coming Again

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- [0 : 00] We start, when do you think the world is going to end? Well, we're not short on suggestions. The scientist predicts that in five billion years, the sun will have burnt itself out, making it impossible for life to exist.
- The conspiracy theorists tell us that, well, we better be on the lookout because we're going to be invaded by aliens, as shown on the Hollywood film, War of the Worlds.
- The religious fundamentalist, as he wanders up and down the pathway with his sandwich board, announces with every earthquake and disaster that the end is nigh.
- Of course, if you followed the Mayan calendar, then you will know that we were all due to be destroyed by a meteorite last December. And in case you don't know, that actually never happened.
- We're still here. So, when will the world end? Or are we just going to continue on for all eternity? Well, Jesus also tells us something about the end.
- [1 : 19] He tells us that the world as we know it will end when he returns. Look at verse 26.
- At that time, that's the end. Men will see the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus, coming in clouds with great power and glory.
- And when will that happen? Well, look down at verse 32 for the answer. No one knows about that day or hour.
- Not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. He's coming, but we don't know when.
- And while we don't necessarily have all the details or all the answers that we want to our questions, Jesus has told us what we do need to know. And things that we can be absolutely certain about.
- [2 : 26] The first, the signs of the end. Destruction. Now, this is probably the most challenging for us mentally, so keep with me on this.
- The signs of the end. Look at verse 1. As he was leaving the temple, that's Jesus, one of his disciples said to him, Look, teacher, what massive stones!
- What magnificent buildings! Of course, he was referring to the temple. Some of these foundation stones that they could see, that supported the vast temple, were 13 metres long and 3 metres high.
- They were enormous. A symbol of durability and permanence. But look what Jesus said was going to happen.
- Verse 2. Do you see these great buildings? Reply Jesus. Not one stone will be left on another. Every one will be thrown down.
- [3 : 31] This great, formidable temple, which covered an area the size of 12 football pitches, and all its grandeur and these great big stones, is going to be destroyed.
- But, quickly look at verse 29. Even so, when you see these things happening, when you see the temple being destroyed, you know that it is near.

The end is right at the door. You see, the destruction of the temple is a sign for us today that the world as we know it will one day be destroyed.

Two things. Signs of the temple's destruction. So, as we look at this, remember we're going back to when the disciples were walking on this earth and they were looking forward towards the temple being destroyed.

So, they say to Jesus in verse 4, they say to Jesus, tell us when these things will happen. When is the temple going to be destroyed? What will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?

[4 : 55] Now, we've got to remember that as Jesus is speaking these words to them, it's around 33 AD. In 70 AD, the temple was captured and destroyed by the Roman general Titus.

You can read all about it in any great big history book. So, 37 years before the temple was actually destroyed, Jesus is here predicting its destruction.

And now Jesus is telling his disciples to watch out for the signs before it actually happens. So, what were the signs? Well, he tells us, verse 7, he says, you'll hear of wars and rumours of wars.

But do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. The destruction is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

There will be earthquakes in various places and famines. But these are the beginning of birth pains. It's not the end. They're only signs. In fact, there will be persecution as well in verse 9.

[6 : 05] He says, you're to be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. There will also be family division as people decide whether they follow Jesus or whether they're against Jesus.

In verse 12, so, brother will betray brother to death and the father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. So, Jesus is saying, look, these are all signs.

These are all things that are going to be happening to confirm with absolute certainty that the temple is going to be destroyed. Let's hope this building isn't going to be destroyed.

Now, here's the connection. Just as there were signs pointing to the destruction of the temple, so the destruction of the temple becomes a sign for us today to confirm the absolute certainty that the world as we know it is going to end.

Which brings us to the second. The temple destruction is a sign for us today. Look at verse 14. He says to them, when you see the abomination that causes desolation, now that's a very strange and confusing phrase.

[7 : 38] We haven't got time to go into all of what it means, but basically it is talking about the destruction of the temple. So when you see the abomination that causes desolation, when you see the temple being destroyed, standing where it does not belong, which refers to the Romans who came in and destroyed it, let the reader understand.

So he's saying just as there were signs to confirm the end of the temple, we the readers of the Gospel of Mark today must understand that the temple is our sign.

Secular history records for us in detail... My word, can you hear me? No. Okay. I'm going to stop and just wait patiently.

Hi. Hmm. So, let's start again on that... Gosh, why didn't somebody say if you couldn't hear? So, just to go back one step, okay, so we've got signs of the temple destruction.

Jesus is telling his disciples that all these different things will happen. There'll be wars, there'll be famines, there'll be earthquakes, there'll be persecution, there'll be all kinds of conflict within families, but these were all signs leading up to the destruction of the temple.

- [9 : 12] Now, for us, let's read verse 14 again. Okay? When you see the abomination that causes desolation, it's a difficult phrase, but it's really referring to the whole temple destruction.
- So he says, when you see that, standing where it does not belong, which refers to the Romans who came in and invaded and took over, let the reader understand.
- So he's saying, just as there were signs to confirm the end of the temple, we, the readers today, must understand that the end of the temple, the temple's destruction, is our sign.
- Secular history records for us in detail that the temple was completely destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. It's a historical fact. So if Jesus predicts that the temple is going to be destroyed, if his predictions were true, then that means we are to believe his words about the end of the world.
- If what Jesus said was true in the past, that means we can trust his words for the future. Look at verse 31. He says, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
- [10 : 39] The words of Jesus in the past were proven to be true, so why not trust his word about his return and the end that is to come?
- It's a no-brainer. Jesus is coming back. Look at the end of verse 8. There's this phrase, these are the beginning of birth pains.
- Any mothers who are here this morning will all know that as you come to give birth, labour pains hit, birth pains come, telling you that the end of the pregnancy is close.
- Something significant is about to happen. Well, for us, we're to read this, that the temple destruction is like the birth pains. It's the signs for us today to tell us that something significant in the future is going to happen.
- But just as birth pains lead to new life, so the coming of Jesus is going to bring about new life. So that's the signs of the end.
- [11 : 51] Second, the promise at the end is restoration. The coming of Jesus into this world will bring about a complete restoration of this world.
- He will restore it to its original glory. Look at verse 24. But in those days, the days following the destruction of the temple, following that distress, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.
- The stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. The world as we know it will come to a terrible end.
- There will be a cosmic wipeout. But, verse 26, at that time, men will see the Son of Man, that's Jesus, coming in clouds with great power and glory.
- now read that carefully again in verse 26. It doesn't say Jesus is going to come on the clouds. He doesn't say he will come with the clouds, but he says he's coming in clouds.
- [13 : 10] In the Bible, clouds, generally speaking, symbolise the presence of God. So if God was to show that he was with you, if God was to show he was present among you, then a cloud appeared.
- So we know the story of Moses going up onto the mountain, and the cloud came down on the mountain, and God spoke from the cloud. It was God's way of saying, I am here, I am present with you, I am among you.
- Now the first time we ever read of God being present with his people, God dwelling among his people, where's the first time we read of that? It's in the Garden of Eden, the very first few verses of the Bible, and there we see God present, living, walking, talking amongst his people.

He's in the Garden of Eden, the world in all its perfection, in all its beauty and harmony. It's a world where there's no death, there's no disease, there are no disasters, there's no sickness, there's no suffering.

It's peace and perfection, people living in the presence of God. Of course, we don't see that anymore.

[14 : 32] The world has fallen away from God. So when Jesus comes, verse 26, in clouds, he is bringing the presence of God, he is bringing the power and the glory of God to us.

He is coming to restore the world to its beauty and its perfection. Now the purpose of restoring the world is to gather his people, to share in it, so that they may enjoy it, to be with him, to be part of his new creation, this new world for all eternity.

Look at verse 27. And when he comes with great power and glory, verse 27, he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heaven.

As we've been reading through Mark's gospel, we've seen that the invitation from Jesus to be part of his eternal kingdom with an invitation for all people, regardless of their race or religion.

But look closely. Who is going to be part of this gathering? Look at verse 27. His elect. Not everybody is going to be part of it.

[16 : 04] Only those who belong to him. That means all those who have turned to Jesus Christ and trusted in him as the only means of salvation.

The one that they recognise as God's chosen king, the Messiah. The one who they look to for forgiveness and place all their confidence and trust.

And who will be there? Well, there will be people from the four winds, from the north and the south and the east and the west, people from different nations and cultures.

others. As I said earlier, I had the privilege of meeting with people from Albania and Kosovo and Macedonia and Ukraine and America and Ireland and England.

All people from such a variety of backgrounds and different languages. But we were gathered together with one thing in common, that we were people who loved Jesus and trusted in him.

[17 : 05] And these are the people that God will come to and will gather together to bring them to be with him.

This promise, this anticipation of restoration is going to be like moving from the winter months into the summer months.

Look at verse 28. 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, it's coming, we're moving from winter into summer.

And we know that summertime is that time when all the dead and the bare things begin to flourish and flower. The dark, rotting leaves have all gone and there's new leaves bursting into vibrant colours.

And this is what it's going to be like when Jesus returns, summer with all its warmth and life replacing the cold and dead of winter.

[18 : 18] No more disease, no more sicknesses or hospitals, no more disasters, there'll never be an item on the news about an earthquake or famine, no more death, no more sin, and no more evil, and no more violence, and no more crime, and no more destruction, but God's people, in God's presence, for all eternity.

Jesus is coming. So that is the promise. But third, we've got the command, until the end.

Preparation. Because this is all great, we can all look forward to it, but what about now? We don't know when he's coming back.

It could be tomorrow, it could be ten years, it could be a thousand years. we do not know. So how does it affect me now? What difference is all of this going to make to my life?

Well, there's two main commands that he gives us. First, be on our guard. Verse 32, no one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven nor the sun, but only the Father.

[19 : 50] Be on guard. be alert. You do not know when that time will come. As we mentioned at the beginning, lots of people make all kinds of predictions about the coming of Jesus.

In fact, we should actually be very wary of teachings about the predictions, trying to work out the times and what's going on and who's in charge in this nation and who's controlling this region and what's going on.

Be wary of these things. Go back to verse 21. At that time, if anyone says to you, look, here's the Christ, or look, there he is, do not believe it.

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and they'll even perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect God's people, if that were possible. Be on your guard against getting taken up by all this mad teaching.

We just simply do not know. Instead, go back to verse 34. We've got to be on our guard.

[21 : 06] Verse 34, it's like a man going away. He leaves his house and he puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task. and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

I'm one of three siblings. I'm the youngest one, so my brother and sister had all left home. And in my teenage years, it was quite normal for my mum and dad.

They could go away for a day. Sometimes they were away for longer. Not that they'd abandoned me, but they felt I was okay at home. And I'd always ask them, when are you coming back?

And, okay, sometimes I'd know the day, but I just didn't know when they were coming back on that day. Which meant, and I think I figured out why they never told me, to make sure that everything was in order and the parties the night before might have been cleaned up in time or whatever.

I had to be on guard, watchful, that everything was in order because I didn't know when they were coming back. And in the same way, we've got to have our life in order to make sure that we are people who are trusting in Jesus, walking with Jesus, living for Jesus, that our lives are being directed and shaped by his plans and his desires and not my own.

[22 : 37] be on our guard. Don't drift into a pattern of living for yourself and going your own way.

We do not know. We must be ready. We must be about the business of the king. That's why it says earlier that the gospel must be preached to all nations.

This is our task. This is what we are to be about. we are to be people who are living for his kingdom and for his things. Make sure that when he returns we are on our guard.

We are busy about his work. Second, be watchful. Verse 35, therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back.

Whether it's in the evening or at midnight or when the cock crows are at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

[23 : 50] Don't be sleeping. Not physically, but make sure you're not going, oh, Jesus coming back?

Load of nonsense. Jesus coming back? Well, he's taken a long time already, so I've got a good few years left yet. Do my own thing.

Live my own way. It's too serious to be putting it off. In fact, look back to verse 18.

We get a small description of what it was like when the Romans actually invaded and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and captured and burnt and wrecked everything that was there.

Verse 18, Jesus is talking about, he says, pray that this doesn't take place in winter. In other words, it's going to be so bad, but, you know, it's going to be worse if it was in winter time.

[24 : 51] Because, verse 19, those will be days of distress, unequaled from the beginning when God created the world until now and never to be equaled again.

It was terrifying when they came and destroyed the place. And he's saying if that's what it was like when the temple was destroyed, what will it be like when the Son of Man comes in clouds with great power and glory.

And God comes in his judgment to bring his people to himself. But if we are found sleeping, what will it be like?

This is a serious warning for us all. Whoever we are, whether we are a believer or not yet a believer, make sure we are ready to meet the Lord.

Make sure we are ready to meet Jesus because he is coming. Look at verse 37. What I say to you, I say to everyone watch.

[26 : 18] Watch. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. ch that him.