

# Discussion Guide

WEEK OF 10.06.24

Series: Gospel of Mark

Text: Mark 13:24-37

**How to use this guide:** This discussion guide is designed to help you facilitate a conversation around the Bible text. Begin your discussion with prayer. Then, read this week's passage. Next, work through some of the questions together. The goal is not to ask every question, but to have a good, free-flowing discussion. Do your best to ask at least one question from each section (introduction, understanding, and application), but beyond that, let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation. Also, if you heard some point from the sermon that you'd like to discuss, feel free to add that to your group's discussion.

## QUESTIONS FOR INTRODUCTION

1. In last week's lesson, we learned about things that would happen in the Tribulation. What of that lesson changed the way you are living your life now?
2. If you had to give a farewell address because you knew you were going to die, what would you say and/or what would you emphasize? If you have written yours down from last week's lesson, consider sharing with the group. (Have a couple of people to share with the group.)

Believing we will be remembered in a positive way is important to most of us, since all things must come to an end. In Mark 13, Jesus gave His disciples a farewell address of sorts. He prepared them for what was coming. He explained what would happen to the temple, and what would happen to the disciples because they were followers of His. But He assured them that they should not lose hope because He would return for them.

**Read Mark 13:24-31** *Jesus continues to answer the "What signs..." question of the disciples*

3. Verses 24-27 describes the approaching end time and the coming of the Son of Man. These are signs that Jesus said would be seen before the end. Light and Dark are dominate theme through out the Scripture. What does that theme in these verses teach you?
4. What reason do we have as Christians for anticipating Jesus' return (v. 27)?
5. Why is the story of God incomplete without Jesus' second coming?
6. What does the parable of the fig tree communicate to us about Jesus' return?
7. Jesus tells us that Heaven and earth will pass away. What never passes away? Why is this important to know?
8. Why do you think the Father has kept secret the time when Jesus will return? What is the responsibility for believers in the meantime? How does Jesus want us to respond to His words about the future? What does it mean to "stay awake" or "be on the alert"?

**Read MARK 13:32-36** *Jesus answers the "when" question of the disciples*

9. Who knows when Jesus will return?
10. How can the analogy of the owner who leaves his house in charge of his servants help you explain the concept of Jesus' return to someone else?
11. Satan knows his time is short. How does knowing this fact encourage you?
12. What questions about this passage would you ask Jesus if you had the opportunity? What details in this passage puzzle you enough to explore their meaning outside of our group?
13. What are the truths that we learn from today's passage? List them.
14. What changes do you need to make in your life because of what you have learned? How can we help each other in that journey?

## QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

## QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

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## Commentary Mark 13:24-37

The events surrounding the second coming of Christ belong to a time after the destruction of Jerusalem. The coming of Christ in power and glory is an event whose cosmic repercussions echo Old Testament descriptions of the coming of God for judgment (for example, Isa. 13:10; 34:4). Jesus here emphasized His coming to save the elect.

**13:1- 37.** Last Things, Great Tribulation. Mark 13 is often called the "Little Apocalypse." Revelation is, of course, the fullest apocalyptic book of the New Testament. The point of departure was the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The topic, however, seems to enlarge until Jerusalem's destruction is only a prefiguring of end time tribulation. (Daniel 9:24-27). It is in this light that signs of the end are given (vv. 5-8), distress and trouble predicted (vv. 9-13), the appearance of an abomination that causes desolation announced (vv. 14-20), and false messiahs and false prophets expected (vv. 21-23). Then the Son of Man will appear (vv.24-31). The unknown hour of His coming demands watchfulness (vv. 32-37).

The phrase, "the abomination of desolation" was taken from the book of Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It referred to an event so awful that Jews would flee from the temple in horror—such as in 168 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes, a Syrian king, captured Jerusalem. He set up an altar to Zeus in the temple and sacrificed a pig there. He also put public brothels in the temple courts. Jesus warned that when such an event occurs again, the fall of Jerusalem was imminent (2 Thess. 2:1–4). The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was an unparalleled disaster for Israel. When the Jewish revolt broke out, the Roman army moved in quickly to crush all resistance. While Jerusalem was under siege several leaders arose, each claiming that God had sent him to deliver the city. Instead, the city was destroyed and an estimated one million Jews died. The destruction of Jerusalem was the result of human failure and evil. It brought suffering and hardship. The Second Coming, on the other hand, will bring salvation and blessing to the people of God.

**13:24–25.** Jesus wanted to give his people hope in the midst of incredible persecution and pain, especially during the tribulation of the end times. He did so by describing his return as the conquering king of the cosmos. The phrase in those days is an Old Testament expression referring to the end times (cf. Jer. 3:16, 18; 31:29; 33:15–16; Joel 3:1) When Jesus returns, there will be spectacular celestial phenomenon and cosmic disturbances that the world has never seen such as the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light. The imagery and language are similar to the Old Testament descriptions of the "Day of the Lord"—another phrase for the end times in the Old Testament (Isa. 13:9–10; 24:23; 34:4; Ezek. 32:7–8; Joel 2:10; 30–31). Judgment will certainly come.

**13:26–27.** The return of Jesus will not be seen by just a few people, as was true of his entrance into the world when he was born in a manger. This time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. The reference here is to Daniel 7:13. This is the first time Jesus definitely connected the title "Son of Man" with the Daniel prophesy (cf. Mark 14:62). All of humankind will see the Son of Man as the ruler of this universe. His major concern will be to gather his people together so they might share in this time of triumph. The phrase, "gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens", has a dual meaning. Not only will he send his angels to gather his people from the ends of the earth but apparently those in the heavens who have gone on before will also be with him to celebrate his triumph.

**13:28.** After showing the infinite power of God, Jesus wanted to make certain truths personal. He did so by ending this chapter with two key illustrations. The first illustration centered around the fig tree. In Palestine most trees remained green throughout the year, except for the fig tree. During the fall the fig tree would lose its leaves. In the spring the sap would fill the branches, and the tree would begin the process of putting forth its leaves. This meant that summer was not far away. The fig tree lesson is likely a warning to be prepared for Christ's coming, though "this generation" suggests that the destruction of Jerusalem was in view. "That day," which was unknown even to the Son, is the time of Christ's return. Christians' duty in the interim is to perform assigned tasks rather than speculate about God's timetable. The church must not repeat Israel's failure to be found fruitless when visited by Christ. Jesus did not want his disciples to despair about the persecution they would face. Jesus was showing that just as he promised there would be persecution, deliverance would follow through his return as the Son of Man.

**13:29.** The phrase, "these things," could refer to the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 or to the events immediately preceding the end of the age. This phrase could relate to the phrase, "all these things," in verse 30. This also

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could be a dual reference for both the near prophesy of the fall of Jerusalem and the coming end times. If this is the case, then Jesus was referring to the events most likely to affect the believers at that time, which would be the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But he may have been referring as well to the end times. The next phrase, “it is near,” may also be translated as “he is near.” Again, a dual interpretation of this phrase is possible. For instance, if verses 28–31 are taken to refer primarily to the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem, then it would be linked to the “abomination that causes desolation” (v. 14)—to the fall of Jerusalem itself. If, on the other hand, verses 28–31 are descriptive of the end times, the “he is near” would fit, indicating the near return of Christ. Both interpretations are possible. Jesus may have been referring to both the near future and the distant future.

**13:30.** The phrase, “I tell you the truth,” calls attention to what Jesus was about to say: “This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.” The understanding of this verse hinges on two phrases: “this generation” and “all these things.” There are several ways to understand the phrase, “this generation.” It could be applied to humankind in general, Israel, or Christians and unbelievers. In this case, “all these things” could refer to the events described in verses 5–23. At the same time, however, the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ all seem to go together. God’s desire is that everyone repent. He could be holding back the last stage of the coming of the end times (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9–10). This understanding of “all these things” would make “this generation” mean that the return of Christ is at hand for every generation.

**13:31.** Jesus was clear that his word is absolute. Literally, heaven and earth will pass away. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, but Jesus’ words will last forever. They are certain. His words will be authenticated by the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and culminated in the fulfillment of the end times. Jesus’ second coming is key to the gospel, because He has promised to return and that is our great hope. At the time of His return, He will be recognized for who He is—King and Lord of all—and will bring to ultimate completion which is the redemption of all believers. You can imagine that the disciples were feeling a little overwhelmed by Jesus’ answer to their two questions. Jesus sometimes quoted something from the Old Testament as a way of signaling, “for further study, go look this up.” For example, on Friday of this week, He would cry out from the cross, asking God why He had been forsaken. But He was also signaling to the religious teachers, “Psalm 22 describes what is happening here.” Perhaps that is what He is doing here with His reference to “the Son of Man.” Jesus often favored this designation because He loved to identify with human beings. But here, Jesus may also be signaling, “For deeper study, go check out Daniel.” Finally, after answering the “what” part of the disciples’ questions in dark detail, Jesus turned to “when?”

**13:32.** Jesus was serious about his followers being vigilant during the time before his return. He emphasized the need to pay attention four times in six verses: “be alert” (v. 33), “therefore keep watch” (v. 35), “do not let him find you sleeping” (v. 36), and “watch” (v. 37). The phrase, “that day,” refers to his return after the great tribulation. Even though certain signs have been given about that day, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Even Jesus does not know. This shows clearly his humanity. Jesus purposely laid aside the exercise of his deity—in this case his ability to know all things past, present, and future—as a consequence of his human existence. Jesus answered one of the key questions of the disciples, “When will these things happen?” Jesus declared that he did not know and they should not worry about it. Even at Jesus’ ascension, he clearly said to the disciples that it was not for them “to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7).

**13:33–36.** The emphasis of this parable is a stern exhortation to be on guard because Christ could come back at any time. This parable has some of the features of the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30) and the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:12–27). Like a doorkeeper who must watch because he does not know when the owner will return, they also must be on guard. The four times—evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn—were the four watches of the night used by the Romans. A constant vigil must be kept because he could arrive suddenly.

**13:37.** Jesus ended this discourse the way he began it—with an exhortation to watch. He emphasized this for everyone as well as the disciples. All believers in every age must watch. Jesus exhorted all believers not only to keep watch for his return but also to watch out so nobody would deceive them and rob the house. Temptations and pressures would come, causing troubles and despair. His followers were to watch out for these things as well. Do not let anything derail you from your task of preaching the gospel and remaining steadfast, he encouraged. Maranatha—come quickly, Lord Jesus.