

Introduction: It is human to want to believe that the future will be better than what is happening now. The world and many people in it seem hopelessly broken. And, it is only by having hope that the future will be better that people can cope with what is happening now. *** People plan events such as family reunions, celebration dinners, concerts and sporting events; and, then they circle these dates on their calendars. They can look ahead to these days and say to themselves, 'If I can tough it out until that day, I hope that day will give me relief from the pain I am experiencing now'. *** People who do not have hope are in danger of falling into depression. This results in a loss of purpose in life. Depressed people do not care about what is going on in their lives: it just doesn't matter anymore. They have a tendency to withdraw from contact with people, to become recluses. *** In today's chapter from Mark's Gospel, Jesus gives a 'gut punch' to His followers when He responds to a comment by a disciple about the glory of the second Temple which Herod had spent years refurbishing to make it beautiful. The Jews of Jesus' day were proud of it. Then Jesus said not one stone would be left on another. *** His 'inner circle' asked Him when this would take place. Jesus responded with a prophecy in line with what all the prophets before Him spoke. True prophecy is less about what will happen in the future, and more about what God's people need to do now to be right with Him. Jesus commanded His people to stay awake and to always be watching for His glorious return. *** Let's look more closely at His response.

I. Jesus describes the future beyond the Temple destruction until His coming in glory after the tribulation and disturbances in heaven: He will send to gather His elect. (Mark 13:1-8, 24-27)

- A. After Jesus says the Temple buildings will be destroyed, His 'inner circle' asks about the time; Jesus' answer goes beyond the Temple destruction to the time before He returns. (Mark 13:1-8)
1. Going out of the Temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher! See, manner stones and sort buildings here!' (Verse 1)
Disciple and Temple: One of Jesus' disciples exclaims over the huge and beautiful Temple complex which had been upgraded over forty six years (John 2:20). It was a source of pride for Jews.
 2. Jesus said to him, 'Thou are perceiving these great buildings: Never, no way, may be left here, stone upon stone, that never, no way, may be thrown down'. (Verse 2)
Nothing left: Jesus uses the strongest possible language to say the Temple will be totally destroyed! This happened in 70 AD, forty years (a Biblical generation) after this.
 3. He, sitting on the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple, they were asking Him privately: Peter, Jacob, John and Andrew, 'Thou must tell us when these things will be happening, and what the sign when it may be about, these things to be completed, all?' (Verses 3-4)
Inner circle asks when: The pairs of brothers (Matthew 10:2) ask Jesus when this will be completed.
 4. Jesus began to say to them, 'You all must be careful, not anyone may you all deceive; many will come in My Name, saying that, "I, I am being (I AM)"; and many they will lead astray'. (Verses 5-6)
False Messiahs: Even in the centuries after the Temple destruction, many 'false messiahs' will deceptively try to lead disciples away from Jesus. We must ask God for wisdom so we are not deceived by false 'messiahs'.
 5. 'But, when you all may hear of wars and reports of wars, not you all must be alarmed, it is being necessary to come, but not yet the end; for it will be raised up ethnic group against ethnic group and kingdom against kingdom'. (Verses 7-8a)
Human conflict: There will be human conflicts along cultural lines. The Greek word for nation came into English as 'ethnic'.
 6. There will be earthquakes in separate places; there will be famines: beginnings of birth-pains, these'. (Verse 8b)
Natural disasters: Jesus now describes natural disasters: earthquakes and shortages of food distributed over the whole earth.
Birth pains: Here is a partial answer concerning timing. Fans of 'Call the Midwife' know that when birth-pains get closer together, the baby is about to be born. As the frequency of these signs increase, Jesus' return is drawing closer.
- B. Jesus says after tribulation the sky will be darkened and powers shaken, then He will come with glory, sending angels to gather His elect. (Mark 13:24-27)
1. 'But in those days, after the tribulation that, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will be out of the heavens falling, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken'. (Verses 24-25)
After the tribulation: After tribulation, God will cause the heavens to be darkened (see, Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10; Revelation 6:12-13a; 8:12) and the evil powers to be shaken (see Ephesians 1:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 12:13).
 2. 'Then they will see The Son of Man coming in the clouds with much power and glory'. (Verse 26)
Glorious return: This is Jesus' return as the glorious human (Son of Man, Daniel 7:13) Messiah!
 3. 'Then He will send the angels and He will gather together His elect (chosen) from the boundary of earth until the boundary of heaven'. (Verse 27)
Gather together: Jesus will use angels (spirit beings) to gather His people together from the whole earth.

II. Only The Father knows Jesus' time, so do the work He has given, always watching; Yahweh is compassionate and gracious, building up His people to see His glory. (Mark 13:32-37; Psalm 102:12-17)

- A. Jesus concludes by saying only The Father knows the hour, so stay awake because He gave them authority to work; and, they must always be watching for Him. (Mark 13:32-37)
1. 'But about that day or hour, no one has been knowing, neither the angels in heaven, neither The Son, only The Father'. (Verse 32)
ONLY The Father: Jesus says no human, no angel, not Himself; but, only The Father knows the exact day and time that Jesus will return in power and glory.

2. 'You all must be careful, you all must keep awake, for not you all have been knowing when the time is being'. (*Verse 33*)
Stay awake: Because His disciples do not know when Jesus will return, they must all be sure to stay awake spiritually.
3. 'As a man journeyed far, having left behind his house, and having given his servants authority, each one his work; and, the doorkeeper he commanded that he might keep watch'. (*Verse 34*)
Servants given work: Jesus is The Man who has ascended to The Father and left His Church behind. He has given His servants authority and particular work to do together for Him. They must not fall asleep in the work they have been given to do by Him.
Doorkeeper: It is interesting that He singles out an individual 'doorkeeper' who is specifically commanded to keep watch.
4. 'Therefore, you all must be keeping watch, for you all have not known when the master of the house is coming: evening, or midnight, or before dawn, or morning'. (*Verse 35*)
All keep watch: The word for 'keep watch' is 'grāgōrēō' – Gregory in English. A pope who served from 590AD to 609 AD, Gregory I, The Great, was called the last good pope by John Calvin. He sent missionaries to the Anglo-Saxons, developed church worship practices, and bought and distributed food to the poor from Vatican funds. Jesus commands all His followers together to always be keeping watch. This is good because the stronger disciples can help and encourage the weaker disciples, so all may be gathered together to Him when He returns.

Those watching for Jesus' return will be gathered to Him

5. 'Not (that he) having come unexpectedly, he may find you all sleeping; but, to you all I am saying, I am saying all I am saying: you all must be watching'. (*Verses 36-37*)
Not sleeping: Jesus now repeats for emphasis the command to not be spiritually sleeping at His return.
Watching: The bottom line of His whole prophetic discourse is the command to keep watching for His immediate return. His disciples ignore this command at their peril. Let us all be watching by doing the works He has assigned to us in concert with other Christians.

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New Testament: Nearing the end of his third missionary journey, Paul told the elders from Ephesus, 'Therefore you all must be watching, I did not stop warning you all' (Acts 20:31); then, he wrote to Christians in Corinth, 'You all must be watching, standing firm in faith ... being made strong, all in love you all must be doing' (1 Corinthians 16:13-14); later, he wrote to the disciples in Colosse, 'You all must continue in prayer and be watching in it with thanksgiving' (Colossians 4:2). Paul put real life actions to Jesus' command.

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Revelation: In the final prophecy of Scripture, Jesus told the middle of the seven churches, 'Thou must be watching, strengthening what remains ... if not you may be watching, I will come as a thief' (Revelation 3:2-3); after the sixth vial is poured out, He says, 'Behold! I am coming, blessed is the one watching' (Revelation 16:15) As a result of all this, let us heed Jesus' words to stay awake, doing the work He has assigned, and continually watching for His return.

Those watching for Jesus' return will be gathered to Him

- B. Eternal Yahweh is compassionate and gracious, building up Zion to appear in glory, and hearing prayers. (*Psalms 102:12-17*)
 1. And Thou, Yahweh, forever are sitting / and Thy remembrance to generation and generation. (*Verse 12*)
Eternal Yahweh: The psalmist poetically describes Yahweh being from eternity past to eternity future.
 2. Thou will arise, Thou will have compassion on Zion / for (is) time to be gracious (to) her / for has come appointed (time) // For favorably Thy servants, her stones / and (on) her dust they will be gracious. (*Verses 13-14*)
Compassion and grace: Yahweh's compassion when He arises (from His Throne) will result in grace to those in His place of worship.
Appointed time is now: The psalmist declares the time for judgment is now.
 3. And they will fear, nations, The Name of Yahweh / and all the kings of the earth, Thy Glory // Because He has built up, Yahweh, Zion / He has appeared in His glory. (*Verses 15-16*)
Name and glory: The nations and kings of the world will have a healthy reverential fear of The Covenant God of Israel because of both His Name and His Glory.
Zion built up: And, in compassion and grace, He has already built up His people in His place of worship before He appears in His Glory to judge all the earth.

The compassionate God will rebuild His city and appear in glory.

4. He has 'seen' (regarded) the prayer of the destitute / and not He has despised their prayer. (*Verse 17*)
Intercessory prayer: The Covenant God does not despise the prayers of destitute, marginalized people; but, rather He hears and answers them in compassionate grace.

Application: Let us all be grateful for Yahweh's compassion and grace and pray to be built up by Him before He returns in the glory of His Son.

Conclusion: In response to a comment, Jesus says the Temple will be destroyed. He then describes His return, after the tribulation and disturbances in heaven, when in glory He will send to gather His elect. Only The Father knows the time of His coming, so His people need to do the work He has given them, and to always watch for His return. But remember, the psalmist wrote: Yahweh is compassionate and gracious, building up His people to see His glory.

Those watching for Jesus' return will be gathered to Him