

Deliverance From Apathy

Deliverance

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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Crossroads Ministries
301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Mark 13, and if you're a guest or visitor with us, I want to welcome you to a journey not only through the shortest of the gospel accounts but somewhat ironically today, one of the gospel accounts that does not include the birth of Jesus Christ. In fact, what we know as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all share with us the complete picture of the life, the ministry, the death, the resurrection, and yes, the return of Jesus Christ, but the gospel of Mark does not include what we call the birth narrative, however, as we're going to see today, it does include a very strategic portion of what he said about his Second Coming or what we know as Immanuel, God with us 2.0.

Today as we come to chapter 13, again we continue looking at the gospel of Mark not just as a chronology, not just as a biography, but really to see that there is this thread, there is this stream of teaching throughout Mark that shows that Jesus Christ is the one is able and capable of delivering us. Now we hear the word "deliverance" and rightfully so it kind of makes us shudder a little bit, but it means to be set free. It means to have whatever is holding us back or shackling us removed. It can even mean to take that which is an undesirable situation and be pulled out of it and placed in one that is. And today, very strategically at the end of Mark 13, we're going to talk about being delivered from apathy, this idea or concept of being lackadaisical or lacking passion or not forthright, and at first it may seem somewhat strange, why would we talk about this, but you're going to see in just a moment how personal the end of Mark 13 is, in fact, the totality of Mark 13 is regarding to what you and I collectively call the Second Coming, the end of days, the last days.

At the very beginning of Mark 13, Peter, James, John and Andrew on the Mount of Olives ask Jesus Christ two very strategic questions. It's in verse 4, it says, "When will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming?" Now you know and I do as well that when it comes to talking about the Second Coming, when it talks about the last days, you know, you get a whole lot of different opinions no matter how many people are in the room, but I think it is masterful how Jesus Christ approaches these two questions. For the majority of what we know Mark 13, he's addressing the question of when shall these things be, and then last week we talked about this famous parable of the fig tree. It's almost as if Jesus takes a step back and says, "Okay, I'm going to get off the question for

a moment and just kind of give you a bigger picture." And today as we go to verse 34, I believe he's going to address specifically the second question.

Now in Matthew 24 and in Luke 21, it is more exhaustive but what you're going to see today is that the message that Jesus Christ has is not for those whom one day will be judged for him, it's not the world at large, in fact, it's almost as if he's turned the tables and he said, "Okay, Peter, James, John and Andrew, now that I've told you how the world is going to go, now that I've told you what the judgment is going to look like, now that I've told you all these things, how are you going to respond? How are you going to internalize this? How's this going to change your disposition? How is this going to change your behavior?" And before we even read the verses, I want you to kind of hear what Jesus says. He says, "Wake up from your sleep." He says, "Do not be found apathetic." Do not be as they're going to be just in a few hours in the garden of Gethsemane where they fall asleep three times.

So Mark 13, beginning in verse 34, Jesus says,

34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

That's a very short passage of scripture but in light of all that has been shared, all that has been communicated, all of a sudden it gets real personal. How are you, speaking specifically to his disciples, how are you going to respond to all that I have shared? And what does he say? Do not be caught sleeping. Wake up. Do not be apathetic. Be alert. So as we kind of walk through these brief verses today, I want to address it from the fact that you and I, particularly as believers in Jesus Christ, the last thing we should find ourselves is sleeping, apathetic, lackadaisical. We should find ourselves passionate, yet we all have the same tendencies to go the other direction.

So as we walk through the passage, just a couple of things to call to your attention. The first one is this: the designation, or shall I say, those who are spoken of individually. Notice it begins in verse 34. It says, "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey." Now for those of you, I know there's a variety of Bibles being utilized in our presence, some of you will notice that the very beginning of verse 34, the phrase "Son of man" is in italics, for other individuals there may be a notation toward the middle or the bottom of your Bible referring to some textual issues and such. Allow me to clarify real quickly. Anytime in your Bible for some of you, when you see words in italics, it means that those words were not originally a part of the text. They have been added by the translators for the purpose of clarity.

Why is this important? Because Jesus Christ just told a parable about a fig tree that as we addressed last week, very specifically based on the Old Testament is in regards to whom

we know as the people of Israel, and here in verse 34 when it says "a man who takes a far journey," well, that could be a multitude of personalities, that could be a lot of different people, and so oftentimes you'll see in your Bible that phrase "For the Son of man." Remember in Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, two very specific designations: Son of man and Son of God. Did you know that in the Old Testament when prophesying who the Messiah would be, the majority of the expression is "Son of man" and not only that designation but in context most of those passages are not just in the prophetic books but specifically regarding what we know as the Second Coming, the book of Daniel, but the book of Ezekiel. Do you know over a hundred times in the Old Testament the coming Messiah, who we know as Jesus Christ, would be referred to as the Son of man, 90% of those designations are in the book of Ezekiel. Why is that important? Because the book of Ezekiel is about the Second Coming. The book of Ezekiel is about redemption not just in a spiritual sense and a forgiveness sense but in a real "change the world" sense.

So when Jesus Christ makes the statement that as a man goes to a far country, you see that phrase "the Son of man," it's being very specific about his Second Coming, his physical return to the earth. Interestingly in your New Testament, it doesn't matter what letter of the Apostle Paul you read, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, any of them, you'll never see Jesus Christ referred to the Son of man in any of those texts. Guess when it shows back up? Toward the end of your Bible, specifically what we know as the book of Revelation and a couple times in the book of Hebrews. So there's this designation about not just Jesus Christ as Redeemer, not just Jesus Christ as Savior, but Jesus Christ as one day returning King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then there's the other party. Notice what it says, "the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work," here's what's interesting for today, "and commanded the porter to watch," or the doorman. That's interesting. This entire dialog at the end of Mark 13 is really a designation between the relationship of Jesus Christ and his coming to those whom he commissioned to watch the door while he was gone. This passage isn't about the lost world, this ending of Mark 13 isn't about those who've rejected the gospel, who will face the ultimate and eternal consequences. Jesus Christ ends this incredible teaching about the Second Coming by making it very personal to those who would believe, to those who would follow, so it designates that this message is for those of us today who claim to be believers in Jesus Christ. Remember in John 10 he said, "I am the door, I am the gate, I am the way," and here he says, "I'm speaking to the porter, I'm speaking to the doorman, because the man has left the house and you have been commissioned until he returns to watch." We'll talk about what that means in a moment.

This is important, this isn't a message to the lost world, this is a message to those of us of faith. What's the description? It's very simple, he says a man is going to leave his house and then one day he's going to return. You know, in Acts 1, Jesus Christ has been teaching the disciples for approximately 40 days about all kinds of subject matters, teachings and such, and then there in Acts 1, right before them he ascends and he goes directly into the heavenly places. I can only imagine the faces of the disciples because the two angels that were there looked at them and said, "Why do you marvel? Do you not

know that this same Jesus that ascended will descend in like manner?" You realize this is the same Jesus that just a few days, technically about a month and a half earlier, went into the temple and overthrew the tables and he made this declaration, "You've made my house a den of thieves." Guess what? That house was the temple in Jerusalem in those days, but ever since he rose from the grave, where is his house now? You're his house. I'm his house. We, the body of Christ, we are his dwelling place. Remember what he said in John 14 and 16? He said, "Don't panic. When I depart from you, I will send another, a comforter," whom we know as the Holy Spirit. I don't marvel at all that the very next chapter in Acts is about the Holy Spirit coming to dwell among, and more particularly, within.

So when we look at the description here at the end of Mark 13, he said, "Here's the thing, I'm about to leave the house," but the owner of the house is going to return, which is interesting because what that means is that the next major event on God's calendar is the homeowner is coming back to his house. So what is it that he desires? What is it when he speaks to you and I as his believers, his followers, we are the ones that have been entrusted with his house, we are the ones that have been told to watch his house, we are the ones that have been entrusted with it. So how do we respond? Well, I think the first question we need to ask ourselves, and this is very important, is when is he coming back?

Now I know that even I dispel against the date and time settings of what we know as the Second Coming, but let's talk about the "when" for just a moment because when it occurs affects everything. Notice what it says here in verse 35, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning." In other words, he says that, "When I leave it's going to be as if it is night, and when I return it will be as if morning, and you know not." Now in Roman days, the way they divided their day was into four watches and, of course, the Jewish day began at sunset or evening time, and so 6 o'clock to 9 PM would be the evening, 9 to 12 would be midnight, 12 to 3 would be the cockcrowing, and 3 to 6 would be what we call the morning. They were designated by how they ended.

Why is this important to us today? Because he says you're not going to know when, you're not going to know the hour, but it's interesting how often that last watch comes up in biblical matters. A few chapters earlier in Mark 6, the disciples are furiously rowing on the Sea of Galilee, it's that famous storm that's come up. Remember when Jesus comes walking by them, they perceive he's a ghost, they cry out to him, he has Peter walk on the water, we know that famous story but here is the walking on the water. Guess when it happened? The fourth watch. You know that the fourth watch between 3 AM and 6 AM is the darkest time of the night but it is also the immediate moment before daylight. Those disciples, were they not in their darkest hour in the boat that night? They thought that they were going to lose their lives. They were concerned that this would be it and in their darkest hour, who shows up on the water? Jesus Christ.

Let me fast forward a little bit to Matthew 28. We call it resurrection or Easter Sunday. Now I'm not here today to dispel tradition and to ruin things for you, but when we talk about Easter, we talk about resurrection, we talk about Easter resurrection morning, well,

technically the fourth watch is called morning, we just read that. Did you know that when the women show up in Matthew 28 to anoint the body of Jesus for the final time, it says they show up before it was dawn. Do you know what they find? The tomb is empty. The stone has been rolled away. So when we talk about him raising in the morning, chronologically we technically mean he raised during that morning watch; in humanity's darkest hour, he raised from the dead so that our sins could be forgiven.

So why would we question? Now I know he says nobody knows the day or the hour but if you were to just look at those passages as a few, when do you think he would arrive, at evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning? It would make sense that he would come in that darkest of hours just before the daylight which leads to the "what." If this is when he shall come, then what should we be looking for? I mean, after all, as humanity, you and I today have this unique perspective. We get to look back on 2,000 years of history post-resurrection, we get to see times of great revival, we get to see times of great spiritual drought. So what should we be looking for? What is it that we should be looking for to give us an indication of are we in that fourth watch, how close are we, where are things headed?

You know, it's interesting that for the believer, for that individual who's believed that they have a sin problem and ask Jesus to save them, did you know that we're not commissioned to look for signs in the sky? In fact, one of the things that always gets us sidetracked is we'll read a news story about a great calamity, pestilence, whatever it may be, and our immediate response is to run to the book of Revelation and go, "Which seal is it? Which trumpet is it?" But do you know what Titus 2 says? To us believers it says we should always be looking for the blessed appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Did you know that all those signs and wonders are a warning to the lost world of judgment that is coming; that's not what we're supposed to be watching for. You and I, as believers, are supposed to be watching for him to shout with the voice of an archangel and to call us home.

That's what we're watching for but we have this tendency to read the news, listen to podcasts, so I'm going to give you a statement today that has helped me throughout the years in light of the "what" we're supposed to watch for. We're going to put it on the screen. This is a very unique statement that, I think, helps out a whole lot. There is nothing that has to happen before Jesus Christ comes back for us. There are a lot of things that have to happen before Jesus Christ comes back with us. Let me pause there. In other words, at any moment Jesus Christ could shout with the voice of the archangel, those that are dead in Christ, those that are alive in Christ would be gathered together with him. There's nothing that has to happen before he does that, however, there's a lot that has to happen before he splits the skies, comes back on the white horse, okay? So nothing has to happen before he comes back for us, there's a whole lot that has to happen before he comes back with us because we're pictured as being with him at that event. However, a lot of things, or some of the things that have to happen before he comes back with us may, in fact, happen before he comes back for us.

Let me tie the "when" and the "what" together. We are not to be looking for the moon to turn colors, the sun to go dark, for wormwood to fall out of the sky, all those things in Revelation, we're to be looking for his blessed appearing. However, when you start seeing things look a whole lot like the book of Revelation, it just makes you say we might be in that fourth watch. When you start seeing things lining up, going, "Wow, amazing," that humanity couldn't have scripted that, it looks like the Bible is beginning to....those are those leading indicators that it has to happen before he comes back with us, it may, in fact, happen before he comes back for us.

I know that's a lot of information so just let me illustrate it simply. Allow me to put this story into my world. It's not going to surprise anyone here that the person who has the greatest interest in our physical house is my wife Tracy, and there are times where she will depart for a season. Don't panic, it's all for good reasons. Sometimes she'll go on a mission trip, sometimes she'll go on a women's ministry retreat, sometimes she'll go back home to see her family in Texas, and every time she leaves, she gives us very explicit instructions. It's real simple: I want it to look the same when I get back as it did when I left. Did you expect anything else? You're talking four men and two dogs, eh, the cat's outside but we'll throw him in there too. Those are the explicit instructions, what's interesting is that, for the sake of example, let's say she leaves on a Saturday and she's supposed to return on a Friday, when is it and what happens late Thursday night? We go into full-blown panic mode. Everything's supposed to be washed, everything's supposed to be clean, everything's supposed to be fixed, whatever it may be. We never, and this is just humanity, we never wash clothes on the Monday because momma's not coming back until Friday. We don't sweep the floors on Tuesday because she's not coming back until Friday. And we have this tendency to become apathetic, "Ah, we'll worry about that Thursday night. We'll take care of that late Thursday. Mom's not coming until Friday. It's not that big a deal." Every now and then I'll get a message, "My flight's been changed." Oh yes. I mean, we're checking people out of school, we're leaving work, we're doing all kinds of things.

Let me bring it back to the text. We always have the tendency to say it'll be tomorrow. We never have the tendency to say it might be today. We get apathetic as believers thinking, "Well, he hasn't come yet, maybe there'll be a greater delay." But how is he going to come back for us? Well, according to 1 Corinthians 15 it says, "Marvel not, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep but we shall be changed for the dead in Christ shall be raised and those of us that are alive will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Do you know how fast you twitch your eye? It's called one nanosecond or one one/millionth of a second. And how many of us when it comes to our relationship with the Lord, how many of us who could share the story of Jesus' birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, and even the details about his coming, how many of us say, "Well, I bet it's not today. I bet it's going to be tomorrow, next week." And we love to use theological phrases like, "Well, nobody knows the day or the hour." We sound so pious when we say that, do we not? He has the right to come back on Thursday if he wants to. He has the right to come back on Wednesday if he wants to. That's up to him. But I would daresay look around, we're in that fourth watch. It is dark out there, much like it was when he walked on the water, much like it was when he rose from the grave.

So what does he say? He says, "Watch therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." In that moment when he shouts, in that moment when he says, "Come up hither," the last thing we want is to be caught offguard. Now when it comes to our everyday life and I joke about Tracy leaving on a trip, one of the things that I've learned over time is it helps to start before Thursday night. It helps to start getting things in order because flights change, weather changes things, and it's better to be prepared early than not to be late.

He says suddenly lest he come and he finds you sleeping. Let me address the "why" here. Now you laughed a whole lot when I gave you the illustration of my wife being away and coming back, and the reason you laugh is because you know what it would be like if she came home early, you know what it would look like, what it would sound like because if not done properly, it wouldn't be good. Can I flip the script on all of us? We all have a tendency to be apathetic, "Oh, Jesus, come back next year, next decade, not gonna happen in my lifetime. It didn't happen in my parents' lifetime, why would it happen in mine?"

So we tend to "push back that date" and we get sleepy, we get apathetic, get lackadaisical, and what do we do? We procrastinate and we put off what we know we're supposed to do under the disguise that we won't be held accountable until the time that we think it'll happen so I can do what I want to do right now. That's what apathy is, right? I want to watch the ballgame, I don't want to get the house ready. I want to go do this, I don't want to prepare things, whatever the illustration may be. So let me ask you a very important question this morning is: what is it that Jesus Christ has asked you to do that you've put on the back burner? What is it that he has asked of you and you've said, "You know what? I know that needs to change, I know that needs to be fixed, I know that needs to be stopped, but I just, I figure I've got a little more time."

You know, one of the most poignant stories in the Old Testament that just grips me for some reason is the story in the book of Exodus. Remember Pharaoh with all the plagues? Remember you've got water turning into blood, you've got lice, you've got boils, you've got all kinds of things happening, but one of the strangest plagues, at least to me, was the plagues of the frogs, and one of the reasons it's strange to me is frogs just creep me out. I'm going to be honest with you, how something that small can be that loud, I just don't understand it. But nonetheless, the Bible says that there were frogs in the palace, there were frogs on the roof, there were frogs in the bathroom, they were everywhere. Pharaoh says, "I can't do this anymore." So Moses comes to him and he says, "All right, what do you want to do with the frogs?" He says, "I want them gone." Do y'all remember the question Moses asked? "When do you want it done?" And he says, "How about tomorrow?" One more night with the frogs.

It's funny, we're a whole lot like Pharaoh, are we not? One more day to disobey. One more day to be apathetic. One more day. But what does he say? He says, "You need to watch." And if you haven't turned on a tv lately, let me encourage you to, not too long,

for a brief moment, it's a dark night out there. The darkness has overcome like we've never seen before which tells me prophetically you'd better get ready. I think Gabriel's warming up the horn. And so I ask you again: what is it that you've been putting off? What is it that you've been delaying? What is it that you've said, "I'm going to continue. I'm not going to stop." In other words, today's one of those days where we ask ourselves a very important question and I know it's somewhat rhetorical but put up with me: if you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that what we spoke of today were going to happen at noon today, how would the next few hours change for you? Dramatically, would it not? If you knew that the voice of the archangel was going to shout, if you knew Jesus was going to call us home in a few hours, you'd do the exact same thing that my boys and I do three hours before momma comes home. It doesn't matter what's on tv. It doesn't matter what the news story of the day. You do everything you can to, what? Get the house in order.

Ladies and gentlemen, we don't know the day or the hour. I believe we're in the fourth watch so let me implore you today: get your house in order. Get it right with God because I would hate for him to find you sleeping. I would hate for you as you're being whisked up with him, go, "But if only had.... But if I only had... If I had not...." Oh, to be found sleeping. What is Jesus saying? You want to be found wide-eyed, alert, with everything in order so that rather than scurrying around, sweeping and mopping, you could be on the edge of the driveway looking for his blessed return. You see, Tracy knows when everything's in order because when she comes home, if I'm out in the driveway, she knows it's all good. If she doesn't see me, she calls and says, "Should I delay a few hours?" When he shouts, don't you want to be on the edge of the driveway saying, "O Jesus, thank you that you have come." Lest he find us sleeping.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Today, I know that the message very poignantly and strategically is designed for those who are already believers but maybe today, maybe you're one of those individuals that the Spirit of God took the word of God and really got your attention, that there's never been that time, there's never been that place where you've called out to Jesus to save you, that as all the things that we described today, you would not have the blessedness of all this. Maybe today is the day the Lord got your attention. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, that doesn't say that whoever passes a test, whoever runs through a bunch of hoops, it just says whoever calls on the name of the Lord, maybe today is the day where you need to call on the name of the Lord. If that is you today, even though it's not about repeating what I or somebody else might say, even though it's not about reading a script, it's the cry of your heart, maybe today would go a little something like this for you, just in your heart of hearts, just in your own conversation with the Lord, maybe this would be your conversation. "Lord Jesus, today I confess and I admit I have a sin problem. God, I've tried it my own way. I've tried it the world's way. I've tried it my friend's way and none of it works out and, God, today I'm ready to give up, I'm ready to repent, and I'm ready to do it your way. God, today I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf. And God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he rejected all forms of temptation, he lived a sinless life on my behalf. And God, I believe that when they nailed him to his cross on Mount Calvary, he was bearing the punishment and the price of my sin and my rebellion. And God, I believe that three days

later when those ladies and eventually the men showed up to the tomb and they discovered it was empty, God, I believe that the resurrection made it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the issues, the struggles and the problems of this world but there's one thing I know for sure is that I've got a sin problem that only Jesus Christ can solve. I'm asking him to save me, to forgive me, and give me life eternal with you. Lord, today the best way I know how, I'm asking you to save me."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, you know, maybe you're that person today, maybe you've even been one of those folks you've been in church a whole lot of times but never has the Spirit of God gotten ahold of you like he did today. Maybe today is that day in a moment when I pray and we stand, you just step out and step forward. We've got a whole group of people who would love to talk with you, pray with you, pray for you, just to hear your story and to celebrate what God has done in your life. But maybe today as we approach that time, it's not about stepping out and stepping forward, it's about in a few moments exiting this place with a different focus, a renewed focus, a change of heart which might even lead to a change of plans.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, thank you that no matter how we entered this place, no matter where we were with you just an hour ago that, God, we can leave this place in a perfect right relationship with you. Help us, O God, today to respond in however way we need to to ensure that we're right with you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.