

Message #50**Mark 13:28-37**

When we were children, we used to play a game called hide-and-seek. In fact, many of us with grandchildren still play this game. What you do is you stand somewhere and close your eyes and then you count to a certain number while people hide and when you have reached the number you open your eyes and say, "Ready or not, here I come."

There are some interesting things shaping up in this world that would indicate that Jesus Christ is about to say, "Ready or not, here I come." Just this week Americans were warned to get out of Iran and not travel to Iran. North Korea threatened to send a nuclear bomb to blow up Washington D.C.. Many tourists have stopped traveling to Turkey and while on vacation I heard a man say, "I love to travel to France, but I am not traveling there anymore." These are scary times. Furthermore, we have these bizarre cosmological events occurring in this country. Floods destroying lives and homes in Louisiana; fires destroying homes in California; we have had tornadoes in Michigan and flood warnings just this week. Add to this a spirit of lawlessness that is intensifying all across this nation. Police in many instances are not respected, they are attacked. Racial tensions are intensifying and terrorism is almost a daily occurrence.

When we look into the Scriptures, these kinds of things all point to the fact that Jesus is about to say, "Ready or not, here I come." There is a statement in James 5:9 that says, "the Judge is standing right at the door." The Judge is ready to come and there are indicators that He will soon come.

It is time that God's people wake up. It is time that God's people read the formation of these clouds, because the storm of God's judgment is forming.

There are many secular and even religious people who promote the idea that we don't need to change. We just need to be who we are and we need to live life our own way because life will just go on and on and everything will turn out fine. Many believe that you don't need to worry about the future. You don't need to worry about facing God. They teach things will get better and it will all turn out good.

Jesus did not believe that nor did He teach that. In fact, Jesus taught just the opposite. He taught that people should be very concerned about the future. The Apostle Paul, who got his gospel directly from Jesus Christ, said that the grace of God should affect us. It should instruct us "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).

The countdown is underway. Things are shaping up that would indicate we are soon to face God and to not see this is very foolish. In this passage, Jesus warns His own disciples that there is a judgment coming and in view of that people had better take the Word of God very, very seriously and make adjustments in life. What we see in this text is this:

JESUS WARNS HIS OWN PEOPLE CLOSE TO HIM TO BE ALERT AND STAY FAITHFUL AND ACTIVE IN VIEW OF THE SERIOUS PROPHETIC PREDICTIONS ABOUT FUTURE JUDGMENT FOUND IN THE WORD OF GOD.

It is very clear from Jesus Christ Himself that Jesus Christ will return. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about that. In view of this reality, God's people need to be alert. **In fact, you will notice that the verb "alert" occurs four times in these verses (33, 34, 35, 37).**

That Greek verb means Jesus is telling His own people you need to stay awake and alert and carefully watch world events knowing judgment is coming (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 96). Jesus wants His people to keep awake and be ready. He wants His people very circumspect about this and not just one who floats through life as some theological air head.

God's people need to keep alert and stay active in being faithful to God in view of the future judgment of God and the future return of Jesus Christ. We need to invest our time wisely and we need to be watching and alert.

Now to motivate His people to be very alert to the Scriptures and very faithful in their service, Jesus tells two parables. A parable is some earthly analogy or illustration that is given that communicates some heavenly truth. A parable is a story designed to teach a real lesson.

PARABLE #1 – The parable of the fig tree. 13:28-31

Now the purpose of this first parable is to get God's people, specifically Israel, to look for certain eschatological things that would happen that will be sign indicators that horrible prophetic things are about to happen.

Fig trees were very common in the Jerusalem area. Most people knew things about them just because they were all around the area. We know that Jesus had already taught these disciples one major lesson by using a fig tree and the lesson was Israel's spirituality was withered and dead (Mark 11:12-21).

Now a metaphor that was often used for Israel in the O.T. was the fig tree metaphor. That metaphor was used by Jeremiah 8:13; 29:17; Hosea 9:10, 16; Joel 1:7; and Micah 7:1-6.

The specific point that Jesus brings up about the fig tree is that when you see branches begin to bud and put forth the green leaves, you know that summer is nearing. The fig tree was one of the very few trees in Palestine that actually loses its leaves in the fall and grows new buds and leaves in March or April. So when you see the new buds and leaves starting to come out on the fig tree, you know that the hot summer is just around the corner.

In **verse 29**, Jesus says just like the fig tree buds and leaves, when you see some of these sign things beginning to surface in rapid fire, you can know that hot judgment is just around the corner. God's judgment is right at the door.

In **verse 29**, the “these things” refer to the “apocalyptic signs” that He had just presented concerning the horrors of things that would happen to Israel. So when the nation Israel begins to see those sign things beginning to take shape, then the ferocious judgment of God and the coming of Jesus Christ is on the near threshold.

What were the signs?

- 1) Many coming in the name of Jesus trying to mislead people away from the Word of God. 13:6
- 2) Wars and rumors of wars. 13:7
- 3) Nation rising up against nation; kingdom against Kingdom. 13:8
- 4) Earthquakes in various places. 13:8
- 5) Famines. 13:8
- 6) Persecution by government officials. 13:9
- 7) Family betrayal. 13:12
- 8) Hated for the name of Jesus Christ. 13:1
- 9) Abomination of desolation. 13:14—the Antichrist declares himself to be God.

Now Jesus says when you see these signs starting to bud, you had better realize that horrible judgment is coming because I guarantee you that everything in the Word of God will come true. This generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Now a typical generation in Biblical times was about 40 years. There is a near application to this prediction and there is a far application to this prediction. Jesus is making this prediction in about the year A.D. 33. In A.D. 70, just 37 years later, Jerusalem was totally destroyed by Titus and over one million Jews were slaughtered. At that time many thought Israel was done.

But on May 14, 1948, Israel became a nation in her land again. Great Britain gave her the land and one historian wrote, it was as if Israel just came back from the dead. She was reborn as a nation and the nation had not passed away.

Some of the things Jesus predicted had not been specifically fulfilled. For example, the Abomination of Desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet had not yet happened. So when Israel became a nation again in 1948, many said something is happening in the prophetic program of God as it relates to Israel.

Just like Jesus said Israel did survive and she will not pass away and there is coming a predicted judgment that will take place just before Jesus returns that will go down precisely the way the Word of God predicts. **The race of the nation Israel will survive.**

God’s Word predicts that a horrific judgment is coming against Israel and just as the Word predicts that judgment, it will take place.

Jesus says in **verse 31**, heaven and earth as we know it will pass away, but God’s Word will not ever pass away. You can be absolutely certain that what God promises to happen will happen.

Jerusalem will be destroyed. The Antichrist will come and go into the Temple and demand to be worshipped as God, and Jesus will return.

PARABLE #2 – The parable of the returning master. **13:32-37**

Verses 32-33 actually could go with both parables. **But what Jesus does in this parable is shift the focus from the certainty of coming destruction to the uncertainty of the time of His coming.**

When you plan to go on a trip, sometimes people will ask when are you leaving to go. When that happens, a typical answer is we are leaving next Monday. But the truth is only you know the exact time and moment you will leave because you are the one who planned it.

God has planned a specific moment for His Son to return and He is the only One who knows that moment. God will not take out TV advertisements to announce the date; but you can be sure He has the date and the hour and the minute in His control.

In **verse 32**, Jesus makes it clear that only God the Father knows the day and hour of His return. That specific moment is not even revealed to angels or the Son. What is revealed is that He is coming again; but the precise moment when God the Father says, “go” is reserved for Him.

The “that day” refers to the day when Jesus Christ leaves heaven to return to earth. It is a reference to His second coming. The day will come when Jesus Christ will return and He will once again put His feet on this earth. However, Acts 1:7 makes it clear those specific times are not for us to know. **Date setting for the exact moment of Christ’s return is contrary to the Word of God.**

Now we already know that Jesus knows plenty of information about the future. He has just revealed some very specific signs. However, in the Godhead there are various responsibilities within each member and one of moments reserved for the Father is the exact moment He will authorize His Son to come back to this world.

By the way, we might ask why doesn’t God give us the exact date? The answer is simple—He wants us anticipating this and looking for this every day.

In view of the fact that He will come back, Jesus communicated five messages:

Message #1 - In view of the fact that God’s people do not know the exact moment of Christ’s return, they need to take heed and keep alert. **13:33**

Jesus begins this by saying you need to watch and you need to be alert. You need to be on the lookout and you need to be alert and not sleeping. The need to be vigilant is demanded by the fact of the uncertainty of the moment of Christ’s return.

Message #2 - In view of the fact that we have been given tasks and responsibilities, we need to stay active and alert until He returns. **13:34**

The first parable laid out precise things to look for; now this challenge is in view of the imprecise moment we don't know.

The fact that Jesus Christ will return and we don't know the exact second, is a great motivation for staying faithful with what God has given us to do. We have different gifts and ministries and we need to keep at them.

Message #3 - In view of the fact that Christ could return at any time, we need to stay alert at all times. **13:35**

Again the reason for the staying alert is the uncertainty of the time of Christ's return. Christ identifies Himself here as the "master."

Now Jesus gives a fourfold division of time here that is obviously based on Roman time:

1) There is evening, 2) Midnight; 3) Dawn—Rooster crows; 4) Morning.

It is no coincidence that Jesus uses these times because these times would be the very times that His own disciples would abandon Him. They would not remain faithful. In fact, one of them would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed.

Message #4 - In view of the fact that Christ will return, we do not want to be found sleeping in our responsibilities. **13:36**

Sleep is often a spiritual metaphor for spiritual dullness.

Message #5 - In view of the fact that Christ says He will return, all need to be on the alert. **13:37**

This context makes it clear that God's people are to watch (**13:28**); God's people are to work (**13:34**) and God's people are to carefully weigh His words (**13:37**). Jesus is coming again.

Now this text is specifically aimed at Israel, but it also is one applicable to the Church. The Apostle Paul challenged the Thessalonians to exactly this same challenge in I Thessalonians 5:5-8. He told the Thessalonians to stay alert and sober and not be spiritually asleep. He also challenged the Corinthians to the same thing, to move away from their carnality and keep alert and stand firm in the faith (I Cor. 16:13-14). In Paul's last letter to Timothy, he challenged him to be sober in all things and stay on guard (II Tim. 4).

Our preparation for Christ's return is not found in setting dates; but in being faithful. It is not about figuring out who the Antichrist is; it is about letting our lights shine because of who we are.

Make no mistake about this point here. Jesus Christ will return. May be morning, may be noon, may be evening and it may be soon. Jesus Christ is coming again.

Take a look at most churches today. Take a serious look at what you see among most people claiming they are right with God. Learn the parable of the fig tree; the Rapture is very near.

The Apostle Paul listed a series of things for the Church Age that would characterize and indicate that we are nearing the Rapture (II Tim. 3:1-9). These would be things that would take place in the context of the church. As I understand it, these things would take a predominant place with people who claim they are right with God:

- 1) Difficult, hard, painful times would come for those dedicated to Jesus Christ and the Word.
- 2) Religious people would love themselves. Instead of loathing themselves and their sin.
- 3) Religious people would love money. They look at their greed as if it is a blessing of God.
- 4) Religious people would be boastful. They are proud of who they are, not ashamed.
- 5) Religious people would be arrogant. No humility, but a haughty, proud attitude.
- 6) Religious people would be revilers. Think lightly, speak lightly about sacred things.
- 7) Religious people would disobey parents. Total disregard for parent's beliefs and values.
- 8) Religious people would be ungrateful. Not thankful or appreciative.
- 9) Religious people would be unholy. No reverence, nor piety, no righteousness.
- 10) Religious people would be unloving. No normal family love.
- 11) Religious people would be irreconcilable. No forgiving spirit, but rather hold grudges.
- 12) Religious people would be malicious gossips. Spread things not even knowing if true.
- 13) Religious people would be without self-control. No self-restraint or self-discipline.
- 14) Religious people would be brutal. Act in ferocious and savage ways.
- 15) Religious people would be haters of good. Hate good things, good teaching, good worship.
- 16) Religious people would be treacherous. People will be traitors. They will betray each other.
- 17) Religious people would be reckless. Live own reckless way; no prayer or waiting on God.
- 18) Religious people would be conceited. People full of themselves and puffed up with pride.
- 19) Religious people would love pleasure more than God. In choice between two, God loses.
- 20) Religious people would have a form of godliness. Habitually have form but not reality.
- 21) Religious people would not have the power of godliness. Habitually do not have power.
- 22) Religious people prey on weak, emotional women. They are immoral predators.
- 23) Religious people always interested in learning Bible. Love seminars, meetings, lectures.
- 24) Religious people never come to knowledge of the truth. They are religious frauds.
- 25) Religious people have depraved minds. Not sanctified minds, but depraved minds.
- 26) Religious people do not have real faith. They are phonies.

Now when we see these things shaping up in the church, we can know we are nearing the end of the Church Age.

These things are shaping up and what this says is that Jesus is about to say, "Ready or not, here I come." He is, as James described, standing at the door ready to come. Are you ready to meet Him?