

Stay Awake

No One Knows The Day or Hour

Mark 13:28-37

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²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³² But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

My sermon title this morning is “Stay Awake!” - Sub-title “No One Knows The Day or Hour”

I realize that eschatology or the subject of end times has a diversity of views. And this subject has the potential to cause debates and sometimes even division. One sure way to divide the church from the inside out is to be caught up in all kinds of theological hobby-horses, social or culture or political causes that will eventually lead to a diminishing love for Christ, for one another, fellowship and neglect the priority of the Gospel that saved us and what this world needs. So we don’t want that.

Having said that, I lean towards a historic pre-millennial post-tribulation view. I don’t hold to this view so tightly to the point of being uncharitable or mean-spirited towards the views of others. Many times, I have seen that to be the case. If you hold a dispensational view, an a-millennial view or a post-millennial view, we welcome all to worship together. We as a church don’t have a confessional view or a prescribed view of eschatology we require prior to membership. Some churches do. Whether that is wise or not only the Lord knows. I don’t think a church needs to be defined by its eschatological view only. We are defined by Gospel fidelity. Our marching orders from the Lord Jesus are to “Make Disciples of all Nations”. So this subject is not something we or any church should divide over.

Diving over this subject is not a hill to die on. Souls are dying. Jesus saves. And Jesus is coming back.

We have a lot of praying to do for our unsaved friends, relatives, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, strangers and even enemies. Your prayers are valuable and needed.

Jesus' resounding exhortation in this passage is for you to be *alert* in view of his second coming.

Last Sunday we looked at Jesus' statement on his future return in verse 26. Jesus is coming back "*in the clouds with great power and glory*".

What will he do when he returns? He will gather his elect.

This return of our Lord is referred to as Presence or Coming (*Parousia* in the Greek) of our Lord, his Revelation (*Apocalypses* in the Greek), Manifestation (*Epiphanea* in Greek - you get the English word *epiphany* from here) of our Lord or the 'Day of the Lord' in the New Testament.

- *Presence* is referenced in 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:13, 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8, James 5:7-8, 2 Peter 3:4.
- *Revelation* is referenced in 1 Corinthians 1:7, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7, 1 Peter 4:13.
- *Manifestation* is referenced in 1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 4:8, Titus 2:13-14, Colossians 3:4, 1 John 2:28
- The term "*Day of the Lord*" is referenced in 1 Corinthians 1:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 2 Peter 3:10, 12
- Another term you hear concerning end-times is the word *rapture*. The word *rapture* word is derived from the Latin word *rapio*. It's not a unique word but referenced *once* concerning end-times in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The Greek word for rapture is *harpazo* – meaning to plunder, to snatch, to grab or take by force. Jesus uses this word in John 10:28 – "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will *snatch (rapture)* them out of my hand." The New Testament uses this word in a variety of contexts as well.

In all the synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke and the rest of the New Testament, whenever you see the return of Christ mentioned, it is associated with a public glorious rapturous event.

- In Mark 14:62, when the high priest questions Jesus if he is the "Son of the Blessed", he tells him – "*I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*" Mark 14:62
- In Matthew's Gospel you see very similar language – "*Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will*

see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory”
Matthew 24:30

- Here is Luke’s Gospel – “*And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory*” Luke 21:27

So, a natural reading of Mathew 24, 25, Mark 13 or Luke 21 points us to one glorious return of Christ. Nowhere in the Gospels is a two-stage return – a secret return followed by a public return. Nor is a secret return implied. You would have to import a first stage secret rapture into the Gospels to justify it.

What about the rest of the New Testament?

They all point to one public event as well.

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a *cry* of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the *sound* of the *trumpet* of God”.
2. 2 Thessalonians 1:7. We looked at this last week. Jesus will return to grant relief to those who are afflicted for his name sake. “To grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels”.
3. Jude 1:14 tells us that “the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones” Same thing is echoed in 1 Thessalonians 3:13
4. We saw Revelation 1:7 last Sunday. “Behold, he is coming in the clouds and every eye will see him”.

You will be hard pressed to see a single New Testament verse that explicitly mentions a secret rapture.

This is why I teach single return or second coming of Christ than a secret return first followed by another return.

Some who hold to a two-stage return have often used at least two “proof texts” for the first stage secret return.

1. The first passage is 1 Thessalonians 4:17 – “*Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*” However, when you read the preceding verses, you’ll see that Paul refers to this coming accompanied by the voice of an archangel and the sound of the trumpet.
2. Another passage is from Revelation 3:10 - “*Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.*” John is writing to the church in Philadelphia but some consider this verse as indicative for the whole worldwide church being removed or raptured from the earth. The ESV translates verse 10 as “keep you *from* the hour of trial”. Grammatically, the phrase “keep you *from* the hour of trial” or as some have translated “keep you *out* of the hour of trial” are both permitted. When Jesus prays the high priestly prayer in John 17, he uses this exact

phrase “*I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one*”. Jesus prays for his disciples and you to keep you, guard you from trial, tribulation and distress.

However, Revelation 3:10 is not explicitly talking about the return of Christ.

3. Two more passages that are referred to are 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and John 14:1-2

So our Lord tells his disciples about his glorious return and in light of this context, for the passage we are considering this morning, I have *two* major exhortations:

First exhortation: *Learn, discern and take Jesus at his Word.*

Let’s look at verses 28 through 31.

²⁸“*From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.* ²⁹*So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.* ³⁰*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.* ³¹*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

Jesus gives an illustration through the example of fig tree.

Jesus often taught using agricultural principles. When you see a fig tree starting to bud, putting leaves out, you know that summer or harvest is near. In the same way, learn by watching signs – false prophets, wars, natural disasters and persecution. In verse 29, when Jesus says “*these things*”, what *things* was he talking about? We covered some of this before. Remember the question from the disciples in Mark 13:4? Tell us *what* and *when* all these things would happen. “These things” pertain to the events leading to the destruction of the Temple. And yet, Jesus says “he is near”. Meaning Jesus’ return is near. This cannot mean he will return in 70 A.D. It means the events leading to the temple destruction are a preview of end times.

And then Jesus says that “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place”. There are so many suggestions for what the phrase “this generation” means. Our Lord is rather emphatic in the usage of this phrase. He uses a double negative, meaning - he says this generation will *never ever* pass away. Some say “this generation” means the church. Others the Jewish people. Others all of humanity or even the last generation. We should understand “this generation” as plainly as our Lord says it here.

A generation usually was forty years.

- The word is *genea* for generation. When you read the introduction of the Matthew’s Gospel, it lists all the *generations* from Abraham to Jesus as three sets of fourteen generations. Actual generations or lifetimes.

- Jesus also uses the word *generation* to refer to people of that time or people in general. When the Pharisees came to our Lord and asked for a sign, He sighed as said, “Why does *this generation* seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to *this generation*.” Mark 8:12
- Another usage of “this generation” used in an abstract way— “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in *this* adulterous and sinful *generation*, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” Mark 8:38
- One more use of “this generation” is in Mark 9. When the disciples were unable to cast out a demon, Jesus rebukes them and says, “O faithless *generation*, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?” Mark 9:19

In verse 31, Jesus makes an absolute statement. Heaven and earth may pass away but his word will *never ever* pass away. Again, Jesus uses a double negative for emphasis.

Implication: Hang on to Jesus. Let his words sink in to your soul and spirit. His words were so profound that the people in his time were hanging to every word he said. (Luke 19:48). False teachers may come, wars may happen, natural disasters may occur, persecution may arrive at your door, but cling to Christ for life. Because, his words are everlasting.

So, first exhortation: *Learn, discern and take Jesus at his Word.*

Second exhortation: *Stay awake.*

Verse 32-37:

³² *But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.* ³³ *Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.* ³⁴ *It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.* ³⁵ *Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—* ³⁶ *lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.* ³⁷ *And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”*

Notice, Jesus changes his focus to a future day and hour he will return in power and glory. Jesus says “*that day, or that hour*”. This is the day and hour of his future glorious return.

No one knows that day, or that hour, when Jesus returns to judge and redeem his elect. Only the Father knows that time. Not the angels, nor the Son. Only the Father God. This can be unsettling to some. All along, we have seen that Jesus as the Son of God knows everything and owns everything. He reads the thoughts and motives of people. He

heals all who came to him. He is able to quiet the seas and raise the dead. And yet Jesus says to his disciples that He does not know his future return day or hour. We should understand this statement as Jesus' wholesome, willing subordination and obedience of the Son to His Father.

This should be comforting to us. Because even the Son of God discloses to his own disciples that He as the Son of God chooses to not know. He could know if He wanted to. And Jesus need not disclose this to his disciples. Yet He does.

Jesus, however, commands his disciples in verse 33 with the imperative: *See. Stay Awake!* Why? Because you do not know the time of his return. It's easy to miss this command. This is the main instruction.

Implication: You don't have to know everything. There are things that contain a certain mystery in the Bible. Some people try to over speculate and want to unlock secrets for you. People try and predict a date time of his return when Jesus himself says to this disciples that even He does not know.

Jesus completes his discourse with what appears to be repeating himself. However, his reminders are profound. Jesus tells his disciples to be alert and keep watch. Because he could return in the evening, midnight, before dawn (before the rooster crows) or in morning.

Jesus says we should be like servants of a household whom the Master has entrusted a charge and work to do. Be like a doorkeeper to a house. The door keeper story is a parable with a play on words. When Jesus said in verse 29, "when you see these things, know that he is near at the gates" The word *gates* is actually the word *door*. Meaning his coming is near like a Master of the house who has gone and will return suddenly. Doors were usually locked inside in first century big houses.

Jesus ends the discourse by saying in verse 27 "*And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake*"

Jesus does not mean to not sleep at all. He means go about your life. But be watchful. Take heed to your life.

"What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes"
James 4:14

In conclusion, Jesus announced the kingdom of God in Mark 1:15 when he said, "*The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel*". One day His Kingdom will arrive with great power and glory. Will you be ready? Stay Awake!

----- Discipleship Questions -----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Stay Awake. Mark 13:28-37

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What are the main commands given to his disciples in this passage in light of the second coming of Jesus?
2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.
 - Why does Jesus appear to be repeating himself with his exhortations? What role does being *alert* play in your progress in holiness and godliness?
 - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

3. HANDS For personal reflection: In what way are you to prepare for Jesus' return?