



Growth Group Questions
March 30, 2025
“Keep Watch”

CONTEXT

Mark 13 looks to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, as well as to the day when Christ returns and restores all things. This section is the longest of Jesus’ teaching in all of the gospel of Mark. This teaching is placed right before the last days of Jesus’ earthly ministry which elevates its importance. Though this word is spoken to the disciples, we should remember the gospel of Mark is written to believers living in Rome who were facing persecution. This message reassures them that Jesus would return one day and bring his kingdom with him.

The use of the word “but” in verse 24 signifies the significance of the return of the “Son of Man.” This is a much different and more significant event than the fall of Jerusalem and other sufferings that Jesus had been preaching about in the beginning of Mark 13.

Verse 26 points back to Daniel 7:13-14. This is the only text in all of Mark that specifically connects the “Son of Man” with Jesus. Nothing is said about judgment in this text and there is nothing about rewards or punishment. There is also no mention of reigning or resurrection. In this passage Jesus only discusses the gathering of the elect who are chosen and blessed by God. The apostle Paul discusses the “gathering of the elect” in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

Jesus’ teaching ends with a collection of stories about the uncertainty of the timing of the end of all things, as well as the importance of being ready and keeping watch. The first parable compares the coming of the Son of Man to the coming of spring or summer. The listeners understood that fig trees would lose their leaves during winter, but during spring the leaves would return, as well as the figs. Jesus implies he will bring new life one day in the future.

Jesus ends with one last story about keeping watch. This has been an important theme throughout the whole chapter. We can see it in verses 5, 9, 23, as well as 33–35. Mark makes it clear that all followers of Jesus –whether in the 1st century or today – have a calling to be active in the world and to live out the good news they have received. We are not to grow weary, fall asleep, or lose focus, but to keep living out our faith in the world.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 13:1-4

¹As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” ²“Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” ³As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴“Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

Mark 13:24-37

²⁴“But in those days, following that distress, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”^[a]

²⁶“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

²⁸“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it^[b] is near, right at the door. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard! Be alert^[c]! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

Deuteronomy 29:29

²⁹ The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Daniel 7:13-14

¹³ “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,^[a] coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Isaiah 58:11-12

¹¹ The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.

¹² Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Frederick Buechner Quote:

“The New Testament proclaims that at some unforeseeable time in the future, God will ring down the final curtain on history, and there will come a Day on which all our days and all the judgments upon us and all our judgments upon each other will themselves be judged. The judge will be Christ. In other words, the one who judges us most finally will be the one who loves us most fully.”

QUESTIONS

1. Six times in Mark 13, Jesus tells us to “watch,” to “be alert,” or to “be on our guard.” (verses 5, 9, 23, 33, 35 and 37). What is He really telling us we need to do?
2. Many people are concerned about watching for the signs of when Jesus will return. How does watching as Jesus urges us to do in Mark 13 differ from watching for the signs of His return?
3. Why is it so important we remember that, regardless of when the end times occur, Jesus will be in charge?
4. What kinds of things tend to undermine our ability to be watchful as Jesus tells us to be?
5. How does keeping watch, as Jesus commands, impact our relationships and other aspects of how we live our lives?
6. How can we help each other to keep watch?
7. Isaiah 58:11-12 includes both a blessing and a calling. Describe the blessing you see in these verses. Describe the calling.
8. The final line of the quote from Frederick Buechner is, “In other words, the one who judges us most finally will be the one who loves us most fully.” How does this sentence impact the way in which you view the second coming of Christ?

9. This week's sermon is titled "Keep Watch" and is focused on Mark 13:24-37. What lessons can we learn from other parts of this chapter?

SERMON QUESTIONS

1. Where can you "repair some broken walls" this week?
2. Is there a mystery (situation you don't understand) in your life that you need to entrust to God?