



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: WHO IS JESUS?

TITLE: THE RETURNING ONE

SCRIPTURE: MARK 13:24-27

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INTRODUCTION

Today we conclude our “Who Is Jesus?” series. We have taken a meaningful journey, learning that Jesus is the Promised One, the Miraculous One, the Incomparable One, the Misunderstood One, the Resurrected One, the Ascended One, and the Interceding One.

We have emphasized that only Jesus fits these descriptions. No one else has had promises made about them like Jesus. No one else has been born of a virgin like Jesus. No one else compares to Him in glory. No one else has been as misunderstood as Jesus. And, of course, no one else has been resurrected and ascended. Therefore, no one else can intercede on my behalf as Jesus does.

Today, we thank God as we learn that Jesus is the Returning One. As we study Scripture, we will seek to show that we can know with certainty that Jesus will return. And when He returns, we will dwell with God forever.

Text

Mark 13:24-27

²⁴ “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

Explanation

Context

The entirety of Mark chapter 13 is commonly known as the Olivet Discourse. It receives this name because Jesus provides extended teaching on the Mount of Olives, where He can see the temple in the distance.

Prior to this moment, Jesus leaves the temple with His disciples. One of them remarks about how beautiful the temple building is and how impressive the stones are. Yet, Jesus does not join in their amazement. Instead, He predicts the temple’s destruction. Jesus says, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down” (Mk. 13:1–2).

Soon after this, Jesus travels outside of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives with Peter, James, John, and Andrew. They ask Him privately about His statement concerning the temple’s destruction: “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” (Mk. 13:4). The disciples understand Jesus correctly—the temple will be destroyed. They want to know when this will happen and whether any signs will indicate that it is near.

In answering the disciples, Jesus does not give them a specific date or time. Instead, He describes signs they should watch for, such as false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, and famines. He also tells them that others will hand them over to councils and beat them in synagogues. Jesus further warns that an “abomination of desolation” will stand where it ought not to be.

Yet, Jesus does more than address timing. He emphasizes their need to remain steadfast. He instructs them not to be alarmed, to stay on guard, to bear witness, not to be anxious, and to endure to the end.

Eventually, the Romans destroy the temple in AD 70. Interestingly, the Bible prophesies this event but does not record it as a past occurrence from an eyewitness perspective. We know about the temple's destruction through a Jewish historian named Josephus. Josephus serves as a Jewish commander, but when defeat becomes inevitable, he surrenders, later receives Roman patronage, and writes about these events. In *The Jewish War*, he describes the destruction of the temple in a way that closely aligns with Jesus' prediction.

After predicting the temple's destruction, Jesus seems to shift His emphasis in verses 24–27. Many scholars believe that He moves from describing the destruction of the temple to describing His second coming, and this lesson agrees with that view. In a moment, we will explain the content of these verses. Before doing so, it helps to consider two questions: Why does Jesus predict the destruction of the temple? And why does He direct the disciples to consider His second coming when they ask specifically about the temple's destruction?

The Timeline of the Temple and its Destruction

In the biblical story, God desires to dwell with His people so that He can be their God and they can be His people. For God's holiness to dwell among people, sacrifices for sin and appropriate boundaries must exist. Therefore, God provides a way to dwell with His people on earth through the tabernacle. The tabernacle functions as a movable, tent-like structure suitable for the Israelites as they travel through the wilderness.

Later, after the Israelites establish themselves in the Promised Land, King David determines in his heart to build a permanent temple for the Lord. He prepares the plans, and his son Solomon builds it. Solomon's temple displays great beauty, and the Lord descends upon it in a cloud after its consecration.

However, because later generations repeatedly disobey God, the Babylonians destroy Solomon's temple, and the Israelites go into exile for seventy years. After returning from exile, leaders such as Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest lead the people to rebuild the temple, as recorded in the book of Ezra. After its construction, many Jews who remember the former temple weep because the new structure does not match its previous glory. Several hundreds of years later, in 20 B.C., Herod the Great renovates the temple extensively,

greatly improving its appearance. This renovated structure stands as the temple during Jesus' lifetime.

In the past, God uses the Babylonians to destroy the temple as an act of judgment against His people. He judges them because of their persistent sin. Their many sacrifices do not matter, because they offer them ritually rather than sincerely. The Israelites fail to worship God exclusively and instead turn to other gods.

Jesus predicts the destruction of Herod's temple for two main reasons. First, the destruction serves as judgment against Israel. The religious leaders turn the temple into a "den of robbers" instead of maintaining it as a "house of prayer for all nations" (Mk. 11:17). Many of them act hypocritically, honoring God with their lips while neglecting justice and mercy. Second, and more significantly, the destruction occurs because Jesus fulfills what the temple represents. God designs the temple as a way to dwell with humanity, and Jesus fulfills this purpose by providing the ultimate way for God to dwell with people. The temple requires sacrifices and barriers, but Jesus offers Himself as the ultimate sacrifice and removes the barriers between God and humanity. Through Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, God dwells within people by the Holy Spirit. As a result, believers themselves become the temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Why Predict the Second Coming of Christ?

Just as the temple is destroyed, this world will also pass away. And just as the temple is replaced with something greater, this world will be replaced with something greater. The temple gives way to the indwelling presence of the Spirit in believers. Likewise, this world will give way to a new heaven and a new earth, where God will dwell with His people forever. In that new creation, death, pain, and suffering will no longer exist.

The destruction of the temple foreshadows the greater destruction of the world, and the indwelling Spirit seals believers for the day when Jesus returns and they dwell with Him forever. Revelation 21:22 describes John's vision of heaven when it reads, "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."

Additionally, just as the disciples must watch and remain ready for the destruction of the temple, followers of Jesus today must also remain watchful and prepared for His return. In light of this, it makes sense for Jesus to shift

His focus from the destruction of the temple to the destruction of the world and ultimately to the restoration of all things.

The World Passes Away

says, “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.”

People often take for granted the rising and setting of the sun. The moon continues its cycles and reflects the sun’s light. On clear nights, the fixed constellations inspire awe. Yet, Jesus describes a time when these seemingly constant realities collapse and fade. Life on earth depends on the sun, so the thought of its darkening is alarming. This world will pass away in a terrifying manner, as the very foundations of creation are shaken. Just as the temple’s stones are thrown down, so the foundations of the earth will also be undone.

The prophet Isaiah uses similar language when warning of judgment:

“Behold, the day of the Lord comes,
cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,
to make the land a desolation
and to destroy its sinners from it.
For the stars of the heavens and their constellations
will not give their light;
the sun will be dark at its rising,
and the moon will not shed its light.” (Isa. 13:9–10)

Likewise, Revelation 6:12–13 describes similarly when the sixth seal opens:

¹²When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Jesus Comes

The thought of the earth passing away can create fear, but Christians do not need to fear. Christ Himself returns at that moment. Jesus says, “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”

Surely, the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars will strike powerlessness in us. For humanity cannot resist the collapse of creation. Yet at that very moment, the Son of Man appears with far greater power and glory. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His words will never pass away (Mk. 13:31). The One who created the sun, moon, and stars arrives in glory surpassing them all. In the new heaven and new earth, we will not even need the sun for light, since the glory of the God and the Son will provide us with light (Rev. 21:23).

The Elect are Gathered

After His return, Jesus sends out His angels to gather believers. He says, “And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.” With the world passing away, Christ lovingly gathers His people. The phrase “four winds” emphasizes completeness—the angels go north, south, east, and west. No believer is overlooked. They gather God’s people from every part of the earth.

Scripture consistently presents angels as agents who carry out this gathering. In the parable of the weeds, Jesus explains, “The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels” (Matt. 13:39). Likewise, 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10 teaches that when Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, He brings judgment on those who reject Him and glory to those who believe.

“...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed.”

Discussion Questions

- Try to compare and contrast the destruction of the temple and second coming of Christ? What are some of the similarities and differences?
- How does the history of the temple—from the tabernacle to Solomon’s temple to Herod’s temple—help you understand its significance in God’s plan?
- Why is it important that Jesus not only predicts the temple’s destruction but also fulfills its purpose?
- The disciples were told not to be alarmed, to stay on guard, to bear witness, not to be anxious, and to endure to the end. Similarly, followers of Jesus are told the same things regarding Jesus’ second coming. Of those things, which one stands out the most to you? Which one is perhaps most practical to you in this moment?
- It is easy for people to get fixated, like the disciples, on the timing of things. The disciples wanted to know the timing of when the temple would be destroyed and many people today are fixated on the timing of Jesus’ return. Why do you think that is?
- Why do you think Jesus refuses to give a specific timeline but instead provides signs and instructions?
- On a scale from 1-10, how ready are you for the Lord to come back? And why?
- How can this passage shape the way you approach suffering, injustice, or uncertainty today?
- If the Lord came back today, would you have any regrets? If so, what?

Conclusions or Applications

JESUS THE RETURNING ONE

We can know for certain that Jesus will come back. Throughout His life, Jesus always kept His promises. He promised that He would suffer, die, and rise again—and He did. He promised that the temple would be destroyed—and it was. So we should certainly take Him at His word when He says that He will return. This is especially true since He told us that the temple’s destruction would foreshadow His second coming. We would be doubly foolish to forget this and neglect being ready.

Jesus did not tell us when He will return. In fact, He could not tell us, because He acknowledges that He does not know when it will be. In Gospel of Mark 13:32, Jesus says, "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." One day, the Father will instruct Jesus to return. Without a doubt, Jesus will be ready when He is called by the Father. The question is whether we will be ready.

As we wait for His return, Jesus' message is clear: we must "be on guard, keep awake" (Mk. 13:33). This means we must remain steadfast in our faith and not drift from the gospel message. It also means we must continue the mission of sharing the gospel. As we live this life, we should live with the conviction that it will come to an end. The treasures of this life are fleeting, and the sufferings of this life are momentary. At the return of Christ, believers will receive eternal rewards, and eternal life will begin.

We will hear the loud voice from the throne declare: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God" (Rev. 21:3).