

82 Mark 13:32-37

The Second Coming

Text

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.”

Introduction

What were your answers from last week?

George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." This is nowhere more true than when it comes to predicting the return of Jesus. The second coming of Jesus has, unfortunately, been the subject of endless speculation. People have felt an unquenchable urge to discover when Jesus is going to return. [Here](#) are a few of the false predictions. There are a lot of numbers in scripture, and people can make anything work. The question is whether it is responsible exegesis.

Attempts have been made from the dimensions of the ark, to numberology of the text, to a timing of the feasts, to coordinating with certain astronomical events, to expressing the years of a prophecy as days and then assigning a year for each day. There are endless variations that clever people will come up with. But each and every one of them has been wrong.

I have been arguing that everything prior to verse 32 was fulfilled in the first century. I believe that Jesus transitioned to speak about his second coming in this morning's text.

Differences Indicating a Shift

There are [six](#) reasons that I think Jesus now transitions to discuss his second coming. Five of them are short and one is long.

First, verse 32 begins with "but" which serves as a contrast to what has just been under discussion. R.T. France observes that "*Peri de . . .* as the opening phrase of a paragraph signals a change of subject." Jesus used this same transition just one chapter earlier. In Mark 12:26 he says, "And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?'" The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus on the resurrection by asking about the

woman with 7 husbands, who would she be married to in the resurrection. Jesus first refuted their notion of marriage existing in heaven, and then switched subjects to talk about the resurrection.

Second, and this is the long one, previously the topic has been "days" (plural). "those who are nursing infants in those days! ..19 For in those days there will be such tribulation... 20 And if the Lord had not cut short the days, ... he shortened the days." But starting in vs 32 it is "day" (singular). There is just one day, one event that is in view here.

When you look at the New Testament, it only anticipates one more major eschatological event. There will not be the Lord's return, then a 7yr tribulation, then the Lord's second second coming, then 1000 years then the Lord's third second coming. There is only one day in view. On that day all things will be brought to a close.

1 Thess 4:15-18 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 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. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 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.

18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Thus the Lord will return, the resurrection will occur, and then the rapture will occur. All three of these things happen very quickly because it is the Lord's return that initiates all of this, and the last thing to occur is the rapture which does occur while Christ is still in the air. Two verses later Paul says, "For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." All of these things happen on the day of the Lord.

Everywhere the NT speaks of "the day." There is "the day of Christ," "the day of wrath," "the day of redemption," "the day of salvation," and "the day of the Lord."

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

The day of Christ is obviously his second coming. At his coming there will be the judgment. Wrath for the goats and redemption for the sheep. All of it is the same day. Peter further states:

1 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The day of the Lord, which is his second coming, and which is the same day on which the resurrection, rapture, and judgment occur, is also the day on which this earth will be destroyed and he will create a new heaven and a new earth. Scripture consistently sees all of these events happening in the exact same day. Thus, in contrast to the consistent use of "days" in the previous section, Jesus now speaks of "that day" which the rest of the NT authors consistently use of the second coming of Christ.

Third, before vs 32 there has been an abundant number of signs (some marking of which indicate that it is yet a ways off and some which indicate that it is very soon); but after v32 there is a remarkable shift toward not knowing the time at all. Previous to verse 32 the disciples were to expect to see:

- wars and rumors of wars
- nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom
- earthquakes
- famines
- they will deliver you over to councils
- you will be beaten in synagogues
- you will stand before governors and kings
- the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.
- they [will] bring you to trial and deliver you over
- brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child
- children will rise against parents and have them put to death
- you will be hated by all
- you [will] see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be
- this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Lots of signs that serve different purposes. These are like signs that serve as landmarks, with one sign indicating precisely where you should turn, and a final instruction that all these signs occur within 20 miles. All these signs now sharply contrast with what comes in vs 32 and after.

- But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows
- For you do not know when the time will come.
- for you do not know when the master of the house will come,

Fourth, In the previous section, everything seemed to happen quickly. In this section there are clues that they may be waiting for a while. "It is like a man going on a journey." In Matthew Jesus tells more parables to illustrate his point. In ch 24 the servant reasons that his master has been delayed. In the parable of the virgins the bridegroom has been delayed. In the parable of the talents we read, "after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them." So although it is less explicit in Mark, the discourse changes from something that is relatively quick to something that will be delayed and take a long time.

Fifth, in the previous section Jesus warns his disciples to "watch." "Make sure that no one leads you astray." It is a warning against false Christs. If someone says, "here is the Christ" do not believe him. But now when Jesus says "Watch" it is for almost the opposite reason. Before they

were told not to be led astray by claims of Christ's coming, but now they are told to watch for when he actually comes.

Have you ever played that game where your hands are on top of another person's hands? The person whose hands are palm up tries to turn his hand over and smack your hand. The idea is to test reflexes. You have to pull your hand out of harms way before he hits them. When you are playing that game, the person trying to move their hands out of the way can get kind of twitchy. They are expecting their hand to get hit and so they sometimes pull it away in anticipation of it. That is the way things were in the first century. It was all going to come about in the first century, in fact inside of the next 40 years. In that short of a time frame, people may get kind of twitchy. They may be prone to prematurely draw their hand away in anticipation.

But the Second Coming of Christ, being a long time in the making, will engender a different attitude. Instead of being twitchy and moving your hand to quickly, the temptation now is to become complacent. It is like being in the blocks at the beginning of a 100 meter race. There are two things that can make you loose the race. You can be too twitchy and be disqualified through a false start, or you can become too lazy thinking the gun will never go off so that when it does you are left in the dust.

Sixth and last, Jesus' discourse was largely given to the disciples up to this point. Obviously it had application for more people, but the disciples were his primary audience. But now, although it is still the disciples to whom he is talking, Jesus specifically mentions other people. This warning to stay awake is not confined to just first century people. This warning Jesus gives to his disciples he gives to all people. Stay awake!

No One Knows

32 "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

No one knows the day or the hour. This seems to be a remarkably difficult passage for some people to get through their heads. After reading about some of the many false predictions you think that people would learn their lesson. But perhaps they do not know history very well and so prove Santayana correct by repeating the same mistakes.

Some have tried to say that we may not know the day or hour, but we can know the year month and week. That clearly misses the point of what Jesus was saying. He was not saying that you can know it within a 48 hr window, but not within the accuracy of a 24 hr period. If he was speaking in that manner, then one rules out the other. If you cannot know withing a day, then obviously you cannot know withing an hour. To read it so concretely makes part of Jesus statement superfluous at best.

Others try to get around this statement by saying that we won't know the date, but we can know the day. In other words, we will know what day of year it is, but we cannot know which year. Thus when that day comes and goes, you now for sure that Jesus won't return for another year. That too misses the point. None of the parables given to help illustrate this truth bear that out. It is not as though the servants know that he will return at 3:00pm but they don't know which day. Or they know which day but they don't know which year. It is not as though the virgins knew the time of the return but not the day. None of them bears out this usage.

Still others try to get around it by making it say exactly the opposite. They observe that the Hebrew calendar was based in part on the lunar cycle. Tishri 1 begins a new cycle and is on the new moon. When this new moon will occur it very difficult to calculate and hence it is known as the unknown day or hour. Hence, they claim that Jesus is actually telling us that his second coming will take place on Tishri 1. Some will do other magic to nail down the exact year. Obviously, all attempts thus far have been unsuccessful. When Jesus says that neither the angels nor even the Son of God knows the time, that should rule out this interpretation. Of course the angels and God know when the new moon will rise. The way Jesus piles on this subject rules out any attempt to actually nail down the time of his return.

Incidentally, just as you should read any Christian book with a Bible in hand to look up the verses they cite, so also should you look for references to original material. There are many things that are tossed about in Christian circles that sound nice when you hear them, but they are little more than e-mail hoaxes. As an example, when Jesus says that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, many pastors have said that "the eye of the needle" was a term used for one of the gates in the Jerusalem wall. It was very small so people would have to unload their camels and the camels would have to go through on their knees. It makes a good sermon illustration for humbling accepting the gospel, but it is totally false. There is no such gate and there never was. Hold it loosely if there is no citation to original sources.

Stay Awake

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."

These final verses are written, not to people who think they see Jesus everywhere (like the followers of David Koresh) or people who think they can figure out when Jesus is coming back (like the endless prophecy experts out there). This last section is written to the majority of Christendom. Those who may not get caught up in cults or end-times goofiness, but who are just plain complacent.

John MacArthur states:

The only way we can make sure we are ready for the Lord's return is to *stay* ready everyday. Common sense should teach us that this is the only proper perspective on the future anyway. After all, we do not know when we are going to die. . . . Staying prepared for the Lord's return will therefore ready us to face death too.

- Stay awake in your prayers.
- Be alert in your minds for false teaching.
- Be attentive for the needs of others, if you see that something needs to be done, then do it.
- Be aware of the trends in your culture so that you will be able to meet needs and share the gospel more effectively.

