

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for December 10, 2017

Mark 13:28-37
The Timing of the End

I. The reality of the end (13:28-31)

- After giving the details of the tribulation leading up to the glorious return of Christ, Jesus shifts to speak about the certainty of the end

A. The picture (13:28)

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.

- Jesus begins by stating a brief metaphor or picture to which anyone could/can relate
- He simply notes how people utilize trees in recognition of the seasons
- Here, He identifies two indicators of the fig tree that one ought to look for:
 - Its branch becomes tender
 - It puts out its leaves
- The picture is simple: When fig trees put out leaves, the summer is near
 - Luke 21:29 "And he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.'"
- This simple characteristic in nature is observed by all people
- The trees act as signs to signal the changing of seasons

B. The parallel (13:29)

29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

- "So also"
 - As a parallel to the signal of the greening fig tree, so also will the events that Jesus has prophesied signal the end
- "When you see these things taking place"
 - "These things" is referring to the events of the tribulation that He just prophesied in vv. 14-23
 - These things included...
 - The abomination of desolation, that event that will defile the temple as one individual (known as the Antichrist) sets himself up as god in the temple and cuts off the offerings in the temple system (13:14; Daniel 9:27; 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 13:5-6)
 - Unprecedented and unparalleled tribulation in the history and future of the earth (v. 19)
 - False christs and false prophets (vv. 20-21; Revelation 13:11-15)
- "You know that he is near, at the very gates"
 - The comparison is that the tribulation signs of vv. 14-23 inform the disciples that the Jesus is near

- Just like budding and blossoming trees inform us that summer is coming

C. The period (13:30)

30 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

- “Truly, I say to you”
 - Jesus’ expression indicating the importance of what follows
- “This generation will not pass away until all these things take place”
 - *Ou me* + Aorist subjunctive appear to give the strongest negation possible
 - This generation will certainly not pass away before all these things happen
 - Who is “this generation”?
 - “*You*” of verses 3-27 is a plural “you” that could refer to Jesus’ disciples or even future Jews
 - Disciples - vv. 3, 7, 9, 11, 13
 - Future Jews - vv. 14, 21, 23
 - Mark 13:26 “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”
 - Why not “you”?
 - Mark 13:29 “So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.”
 - “This generation” is the ones who see these things taking place
 - They are the ones who see the abomination of desolation (13:14)
 - They are the ones who see and witness the flight from Judea (13:15-18)
 - They are the ones who witness unprecedented tribulation for the earth (13:19)
 - They are the ones who experience the days being cut short for the sake of the elect so that all humanity does not perish (13:20)
 - They are the ones who witness the signs and wonders of the false prophet and the Antichrist (13:21-22)
 - Mark 13:31 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”
 - This would be an embarrassing promise of certainty if it was Jesus was speaking of the contemporary Jewish generation in His time
 - Given all the statements about the absolute horror of the end times
 - “This generation” is the generation that experiences the tribulation and return of Christ to set up His Kingdom
 - Jesus is stating that all these events of the end will take place within the time period of one generation

D. The permanence (13:31)

31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

- “Heaven and earth will pass away”

- At the bitter end, everything will be undone when heaven and earth pass away and God ushers in a New Heaven and New Earth
- “But my words will not pass away”
 - Despite this final and total disposal of all things, even heaven and earth, the certainty of Jesus’ words are fixed and permanent
 - What Jesus has just said in this Olivet Discourse is not guesswork, nor is it up for reinterpretation
- Question: Why would it be necessary for Jesus to make such a statement?
 - If Jesus delayed in His second coming, what would happen?
 - Disciples would become uneasy
 - Scoffers and mockers would begin to insult Jesus (2 Peter 3:1-7)
 - No matter what the future would bring, the Words of Christ will be preserved

II. The response to the end (13:32-37)

A. The anonymous timing (13:32)

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

- The plain statement is that no one knows the day or the hour of the fulfillment of the end
 - Despite all the doomsday prophets and Bible code calculators, the truth is that no one knows that day or that hour
 - Example: Harold Camping predicted the end of the world three times (September 7th, 1994, May 21st, 2011, October 21st, 2011)
 - Had the slogan, “The Bible guarantees it!” and the website, “wecanknow.com”
 - Obviously, this was ridiculous and not fulfilled
 - Since then, Harold Camping passed away in 2013
- Jesus not only stated that no one knows the day or the hour, but He added that even the angels and the Son of Man do not know the day or the hour of the end and His return
- After a strong statement about the eternality of Jesus’ teaching and words in verse 31, we now have an interesting statement about His knowledge
- Question: How is it that Jesus does not know the day or the hour of His return?
 - Quite simple actually
 - Jesus limited Himself in several ways when He took on flesh and came to this earth
 - Even though Jesus existed in eternity past with His Father, Jesus chose to veil or cover up some of those attributes when He came to the earth
 - Philippians 2:5-8 “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
 - Jesus did all that He did to remain in agreement with the Father’s will (John 6:38)

- This included the willful restriction of His knowledge of this detail even though Jesus displayed omniscience at other times in His earthly ministry
- Of course now that Jesus is resurrected, there is no reason He does not now know the details of the events regarding the end and His return to earth
- Jesus' overall point is clear, no one knows the day or the hour

B. The alert attitude (13:33)

33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

- Jesus calls His disciples to an attitude of alert sobriety
- They must watch and look out for Christ's return
- If one does not know when something will happen, their only option is to be on the lookout for that event
- This was the reason why God gave the disciples enough information to what the end would and would not look like
- The disciples could discern the potential of the end from the actual events of the end due to Jesus' teaching
- However, the disciples did not have enough information to sit back and wait until right before the return of Christ
- The return of Christ is not something one can pace out and prepare for
- Since it can happen any moment, the only option is to live every moment with expectation of Christ's return

C. The analogy (13:34)

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.

- Jesus gives another illustration regarding the end
- An unidentified man, going on an unspecific journey is preparing to leave
- Jesus draws our attention to the arrangements this man is making with his servants
- Jesus draws specific attention to the doorkeeper's responsibility, "to stay awake"
- The man may return from his journey at any time and the doorkeeper must be ready and awake to unlock the door and welcome the master home

D. The application (13:35-36)

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.

- Jesus then applies this illustration to the disciples
- They too, just like the doorkeeper, must "stay awake"
- Jesus then identifies Himself as the Master when He states that they do not know when He will return
- He gives four examples of possible return times each representing a different watch of the night
 - Evening, after sundown

- Midnight
- Rooster crows in the dark early morning
- In the morning
- Since all the watches of the night are options for when the master might return, the only option is to stay awake!
- It would be embarrassing and disgraceful to be found sleeping when the master returned
- The disciples needed to live with this expectation and hope
- The New Testament contains eager expectations of Christ's return

E. The all-encompassing command (13:37)

37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

- Jesus opens this command to everyone to make it ever relevant and applicable even to the church today
- This was not teaching only for the disciples, this was for all
- We must "stay awake"