

# MARK

## Chapter 13

### *Jesus Foretells Destruction of the Temple*

**And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” 2 And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”**

### *Signs of the End of the Age*

**3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” 5 And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. 7 And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. 9 “But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. 10 And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. 11 And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**

**13:1–37** The Olivet discourse, as this chapter of Mark is commonly called, falls into five sections: (1) Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the temple and the questions of the disciples (vv. 1–4); (2) warnings against deceivers and false signs of the end (vv. 5–23); (3) the coming of the Son of Man (vv. 24–27); (4) the lesson of the fig tree (vv. 28–31); (5) exhortation to watchfulness (vv. 32–37). (CSB)

Jesus answers His disciples’ question (v. 4) about the destruction of the temple, including descriptions of what the end of the world will be like. The upcoming events of AD 70, when the Romans would destroy Jerusalem (vv 1-23, 28-31), foreshadowed the events at the end of the world (vv 24-27). The close comparison of these events has confused some interpreters, especially those intent on figuring out when Christ would return. As you study chapter 13, bear in mind Jesus’ most important point: judgment comes unexpectedly; therefore, remain faithful. (TLSB)

The section of Mark from 8:31–10:52 narrates Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. Our text falls within the next section of Mark, describing Jesus’ Jerusalem ministry (11:1–13:37). And from 14:1–16:8

(9–20), Mark describes Jesus’ Passion and resurrection. The text is part of what is sometimes called the “apocalyptic discourse,” and in it Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple and warns the disciples not to be deceived by anyone or to misread the “signs of the times.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**13:1-2** Jesus leaves the temple for the last time. Some of the massive stone blocks used in the Herodian temple are still visible at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Through Wednesday of Holy Week, Jesus had been in the temple teaching (cf. 11:15–19 [temple cleansing]; 11:27; 12:35). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**13:1** *as he came out of temple* - “And as he came out of the temple.” This is, first, the temple of Herod, one of the “kings of the earth” prophesied in Psalm 2, who (re)built this temple as a testament to his worldly wealth and power and as a bid for popularity and respect. Nevertheless, this is also the temple that Jesus, only the day before, had honored as his Father’s house. It is God’s tool, an image of the true temple, namely, the incarnate Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*ide potapoi lithoi kai potapai oikodomai*. The temple was evidently very beautiful. Josephus gives a detailed description in *Ant.*15.11 [15.380–425] and *B.J.* 5.5 [5.184–227]. See also Tacitus, *History* 5.8. There was a proverb that “Whoever has not seen Herod’s temple, has never seen anything beautiful” (Talmud, *Baba Bathra*, 4a). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*one of his disciples* - “And as he came out of the temple.” This is, first, the temple of Herod, one of the “kings of the earth” prophesied in Psalm 2, who (re)built this temple as a testament to his worldly wealth and power and as a bid for popularity and respect. Nevertheless, this is also the temple that Jesus, only the day before, had honored as his Father’s house. It is God’s tool, an image of the true temple, namely, the incarnate Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*look teacher* – “Look, Teacher”! (*didaskale, ide*). The disciple who calls Christ’s attention to the temple complex plainly expects his Galilean rabbi to be as overawed as he, though he had seen this same rabbi raise the dead; though he had heard him confessed as Son of God and Messiah; though he was witness when, only two days before, the Lord had suddenly come into this temple, where none could abide the day of his coming. Yet what is seen has power to make what is unseen seem insubstantial, even when what is unseen has revealed itself, that is to say, even when the Word became flesh and tented among us, and we beheld his glory in the true tabernacle of his flesh (see Jn 1:14). But, of course, when they saw him in the likeness of *sinful* flesh, he had no majesty in his form (Is 53:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

wonderful *stones*. According to Josephus (*Antiquities*, 15.11.3), they were white, and some of them were 37 feet long, 12 feet high and 18 feet wide. (CSB)

The sentence begins with a genitive absolute of which Jesus is the subject. Commentators differ among themselves as to the place where one of the disciples said this. The text indicates that they were close to the temple. (Buls)

Fahling: Josephus tells us that the stones used in the Temple were 'white and strong and each of their length was twenty-five cubits, their height was eight, and their breadth about twelve.' For building purposes the length of the cubit was about twenty inches.(Buls)

Lenski: All of fifty years had already been spent in replacing one building after another in grander and richer form. The work was not yet done; it went on for years until shortly before the great war. The temple of Jerusalem, which Herod rebuilt, was considered one of the wonders of the world, being built of marble and richly adorned with gold. (Buls)

All earthly splendors seem unsurpassable, even final, to their own moment; so also that earthly temple of God can hardly have seemed in its moment merely a shadow of things to come, even though the far grander reality was already present there, in the Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Some can still be seen at the Wailing Wall. They were an incredible site. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

Huge stone blocks, some measuring 37 ft long, 18 ft wide, and 12 ft high, and decorated with gold, were used to build Herod's temple, one of the most impressive man-made structures of the ancient world. (TLSB)

**13:2** Now comes Jesus' reply. Note that we have the emphatic negative, twice in the last sentence, once in the main clause and once in a subordinate clause. It denotes total destruction. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: His reply is a word of reproach. The disciples were concerned with the shell, with physical values. They had failed in their appraisal of spiritual things. (Buls)

Lenski feels otherwise. He feels that though their eyes were feasting on the magnitude and beauty of it all, Jesus had a tremendous announcement to make. This answer must have shocked the disciples very much. It seems that they all walked in silence up the Mount of Olives where they sat down. That is quite a distance. (Buls)

*do you see* - “And Jesus said to him, ‘Do you see . . .?’ ” Christ has looked; Christ has seen long before. It is he who calls their attention to these transient buildings, as he (truly!) sees them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*not be one stone . . . left*. Fulfilled literally in A.D. 70, when the Romans under Titus completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple buildings. Stones were even pried apart to collect the gold leaf that melted from the roof when the temple was set on fire. (CSB)

*ou mē aphethēi hōde lithos epi lithon hos ou mēkatluthēi*. The double negation with the aorist subjunctive is the strongest way to negate something in Greek (cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 468). “There will not be left here one stone upon another.” Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in AD 70 by the hand of the Roman general Titus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*great buildings* - “These great buildings.” They are shadows, yet he also calls them great (*megalas*), without sarcasm. In their moment, they are substantial and, relatively speaking, splendid; it is not an *illusion* that will disappear, but a doomed reality that will be destroyed. So Christ does not deny the apparent reality of the present earth. Indeed, in Psalms, Job, and elsewhere, he insists on, even celebrates, the reality of what is seen. What he disallows is its apparent future. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*thrown down.* Excavations in 1968 uncovered large numbers of these stones, toppled from the walls by the invaders. (CSB)

TLSB note on Mt 24:2 – Given the scale and splendor of the Jerusalem temple, Jesus’ prediction is all the more astounding. Yet it unfailingly came to pass, under the Roman general Titus, 40 years later.

*Here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down* – This was the result of their constant worshiping of false gods and lack of repentance. They falsely felt that as long as the Temple was in their midst other nations could not defeat them. They put their trust in false gods including a building like the Temple rather in the God whose Temple it was.

This disturbing prophecy must be understood in the context of Jesus’ teaching concerning the Temple on an earlier occasion. It actually forms the expected sequel to chapter 11:17. There, in a pronouncement of judgment upon the misuse of the Temple, Jesus cited Jer. 7:11. In the context of that passage the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar is seen as God’s punishment of the rebelliousness of Judah in the time of Jeremiah (Jer 7:12-14). The failure of the Temple authorities in Jesus’ day to respect God’s intention with reference to the Temple created the climate in which its ruin was certain. (Lane)

“There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down [*kataluthēi*].” These wonderful stones have no foundation; these wonderful buildings, like earth and everything on it, are under sentence of demolition, unlikely as it seems. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:1-2** Jesus begins to talk about the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world with a prediction of the temple’s destruction. What makes a house of worship worthy is not its outward appearance but the Word of God in it. The temple in Jerusalem had been the “embassy” of heaven on earth. With the birth of Jesus, this temple would no longer serve that purpose. Now, in Jesus Christ, the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily among us (cf. Col. 2:9). – “To this temple, where we call You, Come, O Lord of hosts; Come with all Your loving-kindness, Hear Your people as they pray.” Amen (LSB 909:2) (TLSB)

**13:3–37** Second of two extended sections of teaching (cf 4:1–32). (TLSB)

**13:3-4** The Mount of Olives is located to the East of the temple mount, across the Kidron valley. It offers an overview of the city. A “sign” (*sēmeion*) is an event with special meaning—a portent. In the Gospel of John it is the equivalent of miracle. “For the Gospel of John, however, a *sēmeion* is not simply a miraculous event but something which points to a reality with ever greater significance” (Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon* [New York: United Bible Societies, 1989] 1:443). Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The signs of the end given by Jesus have four characteristics, according to *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism* (CTCR document, September 1989, pp. 20–21): 1. The events are not limited to the future or to just before his appearing. “The church of every generation can expect to witness their occurrence. Wars, famines, earthquakes, and anti-Christian forces were present already in the first century A.D. and they continue today.” 2. The purpose of the signs is not to enable the Christian to calculate when, but to “assure the Christian that Christ will surely return.” 3. Watching alertly for the signs affects the believer’s outlook toward life in a

positive way. 4. The signs are not necessarily spectacular events, but can be part of ordinary day-to-day existence. Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

**13:3** *Mount of Olives*. Note that this is a major paragraph and that also this sentence begins with a genitive absolute of which Jesus is the subject. "Opposite the Temple" must have been a magnificent location to view the building. The disciples were away from the crowds. Note that the verb is singular but that we have four subjects. Perhaps Peter was the spokesman. Here we have two sets of brothers. (Buls)

"And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple." Speaking of externals, we see a young Galilean rabbi sitting on the ground opposite the huge and grand center of Israelite faith. In fact, we see two temples opposite each other, the incarnate God and his earthly likeness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*Kai kathēmenou autou eis to oros tōn elaiōn katenanti tou hierou epērōta auton kat' idian Petros kai Iakōbos kai Iōannēs kai Andreas*, "while he was sitting on the Mount of Olives." The genitive absolute, *Kai kathēmenou autou*, describes the circumstances under which the disciples were asking (*epērōta*, imperfect) Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

This was across the Kidron valley and had a great overview of the city. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

The short journey from the city to the Mount of Olives furnished a most imposing view of the sanctuary area. The route followed by Jesus and the Twelve probably led through a gate in the north wall of the city and then eastward across the Kidron Valley, defined on the west by the high ridge on which the city of Jerusalem stood and on the east by the gentle slopes of Olivet. Because the Temple was set at the crest of the western ridge it loomed over the valley and would have been fully visible throughout the journey. (Lane)

*Peter, James, John and Andrew*. When they reached the western slope of the Mount of olives the four disciples whom Jesus first called (chapter 1:16-20) privately asked Him to clarify His pronouncement. In a vision Ezekiel had seen the Shekinah glory depart from the Sanctuary to the Mount of Olives, leaving the Temple defenseless against attack (Ezek 9:3; 10:18f; 11:23), while Zechariah spoke of the Mount of Olives as the locus of redemption in the last days (Zeck. 14). These rich biblical associations between the Temple and the Mount of Olives appear to inform the disciples' question. (Lane)

"Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately." Christ's words have been shocking; they may even have seemed impious. These four, the inner circle of disciples, dare to inquire further. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:4** *tell us* – Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? " They mean, first, "When will the temple be destroyed?" and, second, as Matthew makes clear, "What will signal the end of the world?" (see Mt 24:3), because they rightly, though with distortion, connect the end of the temple with the end of all things. For the end of the temple is the end of the world written small, as the destruction of the true temple is the destruction of the world in one man. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

The questioner begins with "Tell us." This shows how familiar they were with Jesus. The question is twofold: "when" and "what." Actually He answers neither of these two questions but speaks at length concerning what is important for them. (Buls)

The question in Matthew 24:3 is more detailed: "When will these things happen and what is the sign of your second coming and of the end of the age?" They are speaking about two things: the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. What prompted this question? (Buls)

Ylvisaker: From the Old Testament they know that the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Gentiles will be followed by the advent of the Lord. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: Their thoughts of the end of Jerusalem and of the world were linked together, as they are also in the writings of the prophets, and as the Lord foretold in Matthew 16:27-28, indicating that the destruction of Jerusalem was the beginning and a purview of the judgment of the world. (Buls)

Fahling: It was also quite natural for them to connect the destruction of the Temple with 'the end of the world' and 'the coming' of Christ. According to the certain prophecies of the Old Testament as well as in the light of the Savior's predictions His final coming might be viewed together with the destruction of Jerusalem as the beginning of the end. Daniel 12:9ff; Matthew 16:27-28; 23:38-39; Luke 13:34-35; 17:23-24.

Note again that they asked "when" and for one specific sign. He answers neither question. (Buls)

*kai ti to sēmeion hotan mellēi tauta sunteleisthai panta*, "and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" "All these things" probably refers not only to the destruction of Jerusalem but also to the end of the age (cf. Mt 24:3). That's why, in v 7, Jesus talks about "the end" (*to telos*).

The disciples thought that the destruction of the temple would be one of the events that ushered in the end times (see Mt 24:3).

*the sign.* The way by which the disciples might know that the destruction of the temple was about to take place and that the end of the age was approaching. (CSB)

saymion - an *indication*, especially ceremonially or supernaturally:—miracle, sign, token, wonder. The signs Jesus gives have four features: .(Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

- The events that are not limited to the future or just before his appearing.
- The purpose of the signs is not to enable the Christian to calculate when, but to "assure the Christ will surely return.
- Watching alertly for the signs affect the believer's outlook toward life in a positive way.
- The signs are not necessarily spectacular events, but can be part of ordinary day-to-day existence.

Christ does not answer the first question, though after this pericope he gives them a sign by which they may know to flee the city's fall (v 14). As to the second question, the great sign of the end of the world (and the beginning of the new creation) is the world's judgment and rising in Christ. But the final sign is reserved to next Sunday's pericope, that is, the sign of the Son of Man appearing in the clouds of heaven. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

The burden of the remainder of this present text is not the questions of when the temple (and the world) will be destroyed and with what sign, but rather, the questions of what will and will not endure (v 13) into permanence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:5-8** *Planaō* means "to mislead, deceive." By its very nature, deception is difficult to detect. Other idioms for it are "to twist people's thoughts, to cause what is false to seem like what is true, to dig away the truth, or to cover the eyes with lies" (Louw and Nida, 1:366–67). Scripture comments frequently on the subject (Jer 29:8–9; Eph 5:6; 2 Pet 3:17; 2 Thess 2:9–12). The deception of false prophets claiming "I am he" has repeatedly taken place. See Lenski for a brief historical review. Popular approaches to "the self" add a new twist to the deception. Rather than encouraging people to believe that someone else is "he," our society so elevates personal rights, individual choice, and private autonomy that each individual himself is the "he." According to New Age thinking, we are our own gods. Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

**13:5** *see that one leads you astray* – It is clear from such words as "Watch out," "You must be on your guard" (v. 9), "So be on your guard" (v. 23), "Be on guard! Be alert!" (v. 33), "Therefore keep watch" (v. 35) and "Watch!" (v. 37) that one of the main purposes of the Olivet discourse was to alert the disciples to the danger of deception. (CSB)

*blepo* – To be extremely on the lookout for possible problems or traps.

*planaho* – To be seduced to follow a wrong path, set of values or wander from the correct road. In our time the New Age way of thinking suggests that we are our own gods.

"And Jesus began to say to them, 'See that no one leads you astray.' " This sentence is such a powerful and poignant response to their questions that it might well end with an exclamation point. They ask their Teacher, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" (v 4). Their *Savior* responds, in essence, "Stay with me!" This is first; this is crucial. Finally, nothing else signifies, but that they stay with him who cannot be shaken. In no other way will they endure. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Bengel: He had said little previously concerning these things. (Buls)

Lenski: It marks the length and the importance of what Jesus said. (Buls)

And what does He say? "Be on your guard lest someone mislead you." (Buls)

Lenski: All men have an affinity for religious error. (Buls)

My sinful nature loves error. (Buls)

Jeremiah 29:8-9 "Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD."

Ephesians 5:6 “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.”

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”

2 Peter 3:17 “Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.”

**13:6** *many* – This is an explanation of the previous verse. Note the word "many." (Buls)

Ylvisaker: As a punishment God will permit false Christs to appear. There is no record of any false Christ previous to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Lenski: The procession of such deceivers from Simon Magus and Barcochba on to the great anti-Christ and all the anti-Christ goes on to the end of time. . . . They all use the revelation of Christ as their sheep's clothing. The sad thing is that they shall actually succeed in deceiving many. (Buls)

There will be many deceivers and many deceived. "On the basis of my name" means that they will make a false claim appear true. Each generation produces false Christs. The reader should be able to name two or three in our own time. "I am he" is elliptical for "I am the Christ." (Buls)

*I am he.* That is, the Messiah. (CSB)

“Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ [*egō eimi*] and they will lead many astray.” Certainly, antichrists are a sign of the end, but that is of secondary importance here. Of first importance is that to be led astray (*planēsousin*) is to be destroyed, that the opposite of *astray* is *aright*, and that none can lead aright but Christ alone. It is because Satan knows Christ’s absolute uniqueness, and the absolute necessity of following him only, that Satan floods the world with pseudo-christs to confuse, distract, and destroy. And even apart from antichrists proper, the world through many mouths is always crying, if not, “I am he,” certainly, “I am it.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*hoti egō eimi.* Here the *hoti* introduces direct discourse (cf. Mt 7:23; Mk 1:37; BDAG, s.v. *hoti*). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

In the Semitic world the “name” of a person denotes his dignity and power. Understood in this manner signifies that they were arrogating to themselves the title and authority which belong only to Jesus. “I am he” as used by Jesus, these words have been generally understood to constitute a claim of dignity which finds its significance in God’s own self-designation. The deceivers will claim this dignity for themselves. (Lane)

**13:7-8** “And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” Christ created the world as a peaceable kingdom, but peace and peace treaties will not endure among



fallen men in a fallen world, nor can endure here the concomitant blessings of prosperity and well-being. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“Do not be alarmed [*mē throeisthe*]. This must take place, but the end is not yet.” Not as though the disciples should or would be alarmed by the end itself, but rather that until the end, they must not be startled or intimidated by mutability under the curse. However it may seem, the curse has rendered temporary what is seen, until the end (and the beginning of what will be everlasting). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“There will be earthquakes in various places.” Christ created the earth so that it would not be moved. But a fallen earth already moves under man’s feet, and it shall move more and more violently until it removes altogether. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“There will be famines.” Christ promised Noah that seedtime and harvest would not cease while the earth remained (Gen 8:22). If they become uncertain, the earth is moving to its end. Thus, as there is no enduring stability in the ground beneath, there is none in the climate above, till the skies disappear with a roar. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“These are but the beginning of the birth pains.” The Law here is that the uncertainty of earthly life must only increase as divine wrath shakes the world more and more fiercely, finally to remove everything that can be shaken. The Gospel here is that these increasing evidences of the evanescence of the visible (like birth pains, stronger and stronger and closer and closer together) herald the birth of the world without end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:7 WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS** – These developments fall within the sovereign purpose of God, who controls the historical destinies of nations. These things must happen, but they do not signify the end, or even that the end is near. The Bible frequently depicts war as a time of divine visitation (e.g. Is 14:30; 19:2). It would have been natural for the disciples to have seen in the outbreak of conflict in the land or in the disturbances of A.D. 62-66, when rumors of revolt were common, a sign that the end was imminent. Wars, in themselves, however, do not indicate that the consummation is a hand. (Lane)

Note that this complex sentence is constructed on the analogy of the present general condition. "Whenever you hear of wars and rumors of wars, never be alarmed." NEB reads: "When you hear the noise of battle near at hand and the news of battles far away do not be alarmed." TEV is similar: "Don't let wars or talk about war upset you." Think of how upset many Americans were and are about the Vietnam War. Think of how futile the efforts of many to do away with war. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Wars and rumors of war did not cease with Jerusalem's fall . . . One author counted three hundred wars in Europe during the last three hundred years. . . Not any single one of them could ever give anyone the right to make predictions with reference either to the date of Jerusalem's fall or to the time of the Parousia. (Buls)

Then Jesus goes on to say: "These wars must come, but the end is not yet." The necessity is due to the sinfulness of mankind and the judgment of God. General Sherman said: "War is hell." His words have been repeated by many heads of state since. Wars are simply awful. But there's more. (Buls)

*the end.* Not the destruction of Jerusalem but the end of the age (see Mt 24:3). (CSB)

**13:8** *earthquakes...famines* – The first word in Greek, not translated here, is "You see." An explanation. Look at how maps have had to be changed many, many times since 1900 because of "nations rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom." Then, "there shall be earthquakes in many places." "There shall be famines." (Buls)

In verse 4 the disciples had asked for just one sign which would indicate the end of the world. Jesus does not give them one sign for such a purpose, but He mentions many signs: false Christs, wars, talk about war, earthquakes, famines. None of these can be used to determine the end of all things and Christ's second coming. All of these signs, things beyond our control, are warning for us to repent. Verse 8 ends on a somber note: "These things are only the beginning of the birth-pangs." (Buls)

Lenski: the world of nature is affected by sin in the same way as the world of men, and thus these disturbing manifestations are signs of the end . . . These are only a prelude 'a beginning of birth pangs' much severer pains and writings must be added before the new heavenly eon comes to full birth. (Buls)

Fahling: While these things are preclusive both of the destruction of Jerusalem and of Christ's second coming, these things are but 'the beginning of sorrows' because 'the end is not yet.' (Buls)

*birth pains*. The rabbis spoke of "birth pains," i.e., sufferings, that would precede the coming of the Messiah. (CSB)

TLSB note on Mt 24:8 – Birth pains typically become more frequent and intense as the time of delivery approaches. So also it will be in the end times. The severity and frequency of cataclysmic events will increase. (TLSB)

*archē ōdinōn tauta*. "These are but the beginning of the birth pains." The "Son of Man" (13:26) will appear in history after a painful "birth experience." Jesus compares wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, and famines to the beginning of these pains, but he warns that they are not signs that the end is to come immediately ("not yet," v 7, "but the beginning," v 8). They do not enable any precise dating of that Last Day. The metaphor of birth pains also suggests that the end is going to be both judgment and salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

These words of Jesus read like a page out of our daily newspaper: cults with their messiahs, wars and threats of war, nations warring against nation, earthquakes and famines. We have them all. They are the evidence that sin has corrupted all things and that only the Lord's coming can finally set things straight. Perhaps the situation is even more critical in our day than in Jesus' day, for at that time Rome had enforced a relative peace on the entire civilized world. (PBC)

**13:9-13** The power to stand firm (*hupomenō*) doesn't come from within. We look for the Holy Spirit to provide the strength to "bear up despite difficulty and suffering," enabling us "to demonstrate endurance" (Louw and Nida, 1:308). Perseverance is not easily achieved (Heb 6:11-12; 10:36). "We shall not be moved" establishes the idea of rootedness. From the outside, standing firm may appear as stubbornness, obstinacy, or inflexibility. The Greek word for stubbornness (*sklērotēs*) means "refusing to change, refusing to think differently" (Louw and Nida, 1:766). It is not used, however, of believers. Rather, it describes those who refuse to accept the Gospel (Rom 2:5). Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

An alternative treatment of v 13b could emphasize the irony of the Christian who stands firm in the freedom of the Gospel, but who nevertheless is accused of inflexibility and stubbornness when he or she doesn't collapse before the fallen will as expressed in devalued societal norms. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

*Illustration:* "We shall not be moved" sounds like stubbornness; like the elderly man who refused to leave his cabin, though volcanic Mt. St. Helens was about to explode; or the couple who stood on the porch of their house as the flood waters ascended the steps, and refused to get in a rescue boat and leave. "We shall not be moved!" may appear courageous when ultimately it is foolish. But sometimes what appears foolish and stubborn isn't. Sometimes it is faithfully standing firm. Eusebius, the historian of the early church, records the story of aged Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. A persecution of Christians had begun and believers in Christ were being rounded up. Christians were threatened with wild beasts or death at the stake unless they denied Christ and swore allegiance to Caesar. Polycarp was arrested and brought before the proconsul, who urged him, "Swear by Caesar's fortune; change your attitude. . . . Swear, and I will set you free: [execrate] curse Christ" Polycarp answered, "For 86 years I have been His servant, and He has never done me wrong: how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" (Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, tr. G. A. Williamson [Minneapolis: Augsburg] 171). How stubborn Polycarp must have appeared to the watching crowds as the torch was set to the stake. This wasn't stubbornness, however. Though he was tied to the stake, he was standing firm by the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

**13:9-10** "But be on your guard." Here again, as in v 5, we hear a Savior speak. Earth and everything on it must disappear; Christ himself has decreed it. But he is determined that his disciples shall not be lost, however they may be shaken by a shaking world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings": The peace of their daily lives will not endure, nor the approval of their society. They must not be surprised to see these things vanish. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"For my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations." The witness they will bear is the everlasting Gospel. The Word that will outlast the heavens and the earth will, through them, enter all the dying world, to all the fading kings, administrations, and nations. It is the Word of Christ, by believing which (certainly *not* by proclaiming which) they will endure forever. (It is, of course, implied that through their witness others shall receive the everlasting life while the world is passing away.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:9** Persecution of Christians was common in the first century and is still common today in parts of the world. (TLSB)

*be on guard* – In verse 5 they must watch out for deceivers. Here it has to do with the person themselves. "Look out for yourselves." Verses 9-11 form a unit and verses 12-13 form another. The first unit speaks of what will happen from without and the second of what will happen from within. The word "betray" is common to both. In both cases the betrayal leads to something worse. Compare Matthew 10:17-22 on this section. (Buls)

Bengel: Mark is not an epitomizer of Matthew.

Before the present century many thought that Mark is an abridged form of Matthew. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: However disunited the world may be otherwise, it is one in its hatred of Jesus' disciples. (Buls)

Thus far He is speaking of persecution by the Jews. Persecution of true children of God began with the Jews, the Covenant people. On this compare Acts 22:19; 26:11; 2 Corinthians 11:24. (Buls)

Hendricksen: From the book of Acts (22:19) we learn that Saul (Paul) of Tarsus caused believers in Christ to receive this horrible punishment. (Buls)

But persecution was administered also by Gentiles. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Think of such procurators as Pontius Pilate, Felix, and Festus; as to 'king' of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1) and of Agrippa II (Acts 25:13,24,26). Even Herod Antipas, who technically was not a king, is also given that title at times (Matthew 14:9). It was Pontius Pilate who sentenced Jesus to die on the cross after he had sent him to 'king' Herod Antipas (Mark 15:15). (Buls)

What happened to Jesus will happen to His disciples, persecuted by both Jew and Gentile. "Because of Me." Look at Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-8; 26:14-15, John 15:18-21. (Buls)

*to councils.* The religious courts made up of the synagogue elders. (CSB)

*paradōsousin humas*, "they will hand you over." The "indefinite plural" indicates that no one in particular is being referred to, but someone in general. In English, it is sometimes translated with a passive form. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

"For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings." The terms look at persecution from both a Jewish context ("councils" and "synagogues") and a Gentile one ("governors" and "kings"). Some of this was fulfilled in Acts. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*beaten.* Infraction of Jewish regulations was punishable by flogging, the maximum penalty being 39 strokes with the whip (see 2Co 11:23-24). (CSB)

*stand before governors and kings as witnesses* – After trial before the Jewish courts, they will be turned over to the Gentile authorities, presumably as disloyal provincials who disturb the peace and incite to riot. The double reference, "kings and governors," serves to designate all men of authority (cf chapters 6:14; 15:2; Matt 27:2), it may also look beyond this local situation to the experience of arrest throughout the Empire. (Lane)

RSV translates "To bear witness before them." NEB: "To testify in their presence." AAT: "To tell them the truth." Jesus did not soften the persecutions which were coming. We must remember that for ourselves too. (Buls)

Persecution of Christians was common in the first century and is still common today in parts of the world. (TLSB)

**13:10** *first*. Before the end of the age (see Mt 24:14). (CSB)

Before the end of the world and Judgment day. (TLSB)

*proclaimed to all nations* – Jesus announces God’s plan to include the Gentiles. (TLSB)

Bengel: The preaching of the Gospel was furthered by persecution, before the end shall come. (Buls)

"Must" denotes the necessity caused by the will of God. Look at Matthew 24:14: "And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world for the purpose of a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Buls)

Lenski: This is the clearest statement in the Gospel concerning the actual time of the end. (Buls)

Unknown and foreign lands were first entered by missionaries. Think of the world-wide mission work which is being done. Here are some Old Testament passages which prophesied of this matter: Psalm 72:8-11,17; 96:1-10; Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:6-12; 52:10; 60:1-3,6; Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 26:4; 28:14. (Buls)

*kai eis panta ta ethnē prōton dei kēruchthēnai to euangelion*. “And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.” “To all nations first” is in the emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence. This is not a promise that if we get the Gospel to every nation, then the end will come. We can’t bring the Kingdom. Only God will do that at the appointed time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**13:11** *bring you to trial* – “And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.” As above, the peace of their daily lives will not endure, but this (like the end of all things) is no cause for anxiety. When they bear witness, it will be the same enduring Word that they will be speaking. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*the Holy Spirit* – The Holy Spirit would help them bear witness to the Gospel. (TLSB)

This is a very comforting verse. The disciples are plainly told not even to think about what they shall say. He gives the reason why they should not even think about what they would say. It will be given to them. All they have to do is to speak what will be given to them. This is an amazing sentence. "For, it's not you who are speaking but the Holy Spirit is speaking." He does not mean, of course, that they will become mere robots. The concurrence of the activity of the Holy spirit and the new man in the Christian is truly amazing. (Buls)

Hendriksen: That this prophecy, too, was gloriously fulfilled is evident from the speeches of Peter, or Peter and John (Acts 4:8-12,19,20 with the effect upon the audience described in 4:13-14) and from those of Paul (Acts 21:39-22:21; 23:1,6; 24:10-21; 26:1-23. (Buls)

“It is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.” To these disciples who are to be apostles, the Holy Spirit will give these words directly. To the world’s end, the Holy Spirit gives all disciples these words indirectly through Holy Scripture, to be heard, marked, learned, and summoned by the Spirit from our hearts as occasion is granted. Thus, the miracles of inspiration and enscripturation

guarantee that as we speak the everlasting Gospel, it is not we who speak, but the Holy Spirit himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:12-13** “And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake.” Christ so created man that family harmony should be everlasting and human love be universal. But humanity is fallen; only the family that is in Christ and only the love among those who are led aright will endure forever. Apart from him, all family ties and all human love will disappear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“And you will be hated [*esesthe misoumenoi*] by all for my name’s sake.” The hatreds, resentments, and wicked lovelessness that are endemic in all fallen nature will only burst forth all the more as those who are dying confront those who have eternal life. By the very life his disciples have in him, they will be the odor of death to those who are dying, for it is through their union through faith with the Living One that they condemn this world (that is, like Noah, acknowledge its doom, Heb 11:7) and become heirs with him of the world to come. Therefore, they will be hated by all who are in denial. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“Over to death . . . have them put to death.” Christ created man to live forever; by sin came death. Insofar as his disciples, too, are also sinners, their present bodily lives will not endure. Whether by martyrdom, by the judgments now present in a fallen world, as sickness, disaster, age, and so forth, or by the appearing of Christ, these present bodies of sin and the sinful nature that remains in them are, like the temple in Jerusalem and the whole fallen world, sentenced to destruction. Of course, for his disciples, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and all judgments imply only that their release and resurrection is drawing near. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“But the one who endures [*hupomeinas*] to the end [*eis telos*] will be saved.” That is, the one who is found enduring to the end will be rescued from all he has endured: sin, Satan, and all the sorrows of mutability. But also, and self-evidently, the one who endures to the end will *endure*, that is, the one who has eternal life will have eternal life, glorious, powerful, immortal, and imperishable: in a word, permanent. He who stands firm will stand firm forever, for he who stands firm is simply he who stands in Christ, and the one who is in Christ will be in Christ, world without end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:12 brother will deliver** – Anti-Christian sentiment would divide families, even to the point of close relatives handing over loved ones for execution. (TLSB)

We mentioned in verse 9 that verses 9-11 form a unit and verses 12-13 form another. Verses 9-11 dwell on persecution from without, from both Jews and Gentiles. Verses 12-13 speak of persecution from within. Compare Matthew 10:21-22. Ylvisaker is of the opinion that apostates are included in this verse. That could be. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: The apostates frequently became the most fanatical of persecutors.

Lenski: Jesus is speaking of frightful cases of denunciation in pagan courts, some of which happened during the ten great Roman persecutions. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Because of basic religious difference, intra-family relationships were often far from ideal. It is clear that the cleavage took place on account of Christ. (Buls)

Nothing divides close relationships quite so much as do differences in religion. Look at Luke 12:49-53. Betrayal, rebellion, death among close relatives are mentioned in Mark 13:12. Lenski quotes Besser who says that two things are stronger than natural love, the one born of hell, the other born of heaven. (Buls)

**13:13** *will be hated by all* – This is so because God’s Law offends and because Jesus claimed to be the only way to salvation (John 14:6). (TLSB)

This qualification indicates that the abuse heaped upon the disciples is really intended for Jesus, and that the disciples are persecuted only because they identified with Him. It was the sense of a communion of suffering with Jesus that gave to the early church a sense of privilege that they could assume the hurt was directed toward Christ, (Phil 1:29 ff; 3:8-11; Col 1:24). (Lane)

*endures to the end.* Such perseverance is a sure indication of salvation (cf. Heb 3:14; 6:11–12; 10:36). (CSB)

By God’s grace through faith in Christ alone. (TLSB)

The verse begins with a future periphrastic, passive voice. It denotes constant action. "You will be constantly hated, etc." This speaks of the general hatred of the world for the Christians. The Christian can expect hatred from the most unexpected quarter. Why can the Christians expect this hatred? Because of Jesus' name. Obviously Jesus means that this person confesses the name and teaching of Jesus. Even among Christians it happens that those who remain faithful to Jesus' Word are hated by other who call themselves Christians. (Buls)

But the last sentence in this verse is very comforting. All things in this life come to an end, no matter how beautiful or terrible they may be. "He who endures" means the person who stands up under adverse circumstance. "To the end" means "until death" not "until the end of the world." Though of course there will be instances in which the end of the world will be the deliverance of Christians who are still living at that time. (Buls)

Here we have a prophecy and a promise. Beginning with verse 6 Jesus predicts a number of items. The most comforting of all is "shall be saved." (Buls)

“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” Jesus is not claiming that it is within one’s own power “to endure,” nor is he saying that endurance is a work that saves. One endures by the grace of God; it is God who works faith and keeps us in it through the worst of trials. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

hoopomen – To remain or have the fortitude to persevere. This can only come from the power of the Holy Spirit working within us through Word and Sacraments. Interestingly in today’s society if one stands firm in the freedom of the Gospel, he/she might well be accused of being inflexible, stubborn or even to have a terrorist mindset. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

Galatians 5:1, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

Hebrews 6:11-12, “we want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

Hebrews 10:36, “You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.”

**13:3–13** Jesus warns His disciples about the coming troubles they will face as they bring the Gospel into the world. He encourages them to trust God and rely on the Holy Spirit, especially when they face opposition and persecution. Nobody likes to be shown his or her sin. As Christians proclaim Law and Gospel, they need to be ready to endure the loss of everything, including their lives. Because God wants all people to hear the Gospel, He prolongs the NT age so that the Church may witness to all the earth. To Him alone we owe the survival of our personal faith as well. • “Lord of harvest, great and kind, Rouse to action heart and mind; Let the gath’ring nations all See Your light and heed Your call.” Amen. (LSB 830:6) (TLSB)

#### *The Abomination of Desolation*

**14 “But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, 16 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 17 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 18 Pray that it may not happen in winter. 19 For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. 20 And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. 21 And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.**

**13:14** *the abomination that causes desolation.* Repeats a prophecy recorded in Dn 9:27 about the desecration of the temple under the Seleucids (1Macc 1:54–59). Jesus announces a new desolation and destruction of the Jerusalem temple, which will be carried out by the Romans in AD 70. This event will end all temple worship and sacrifice. But these desolations are but a taste of what lies in the future (cf 2Th 2:3–4). (TLSB)

*standing where he ought not be.* † That is, in the Holy Land and in the Holy Place. (CSB)

*let the reader understand.* Reader is challenged to think about these things, esp in light of Dn 9:27. Cf Rv 13:18. (TLSB)

**13:15–16** Jesus warned His followers to flee quickly when they see these events unfold. (TLSB)

**13:15** *not go down.* Houses were often adjoined or close to one another, so one could run from roof to roof. Stairs were often outside the house. Eusebius of Caesarea: “The people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella” (NPNF 2 1:138). (TLSB)

**13:16** *cloak.* Outer garment workers left at home or laid on the ground when working. (TLSB)

**13:17** *alas.* Gk *ouai*, an interjection expressing horror. Also translated as “woe” (14:21). (TLSB)



*pregnant women and nursing mothers.* Representative of anyone forced to flee under especially difficult circumstances. (CSB)

It is more difficult for pregnant women and new mothers to flee. (TLSB)

**13:18** *Pray.* For God’s mercy. (TLSB)

*in winter.* The time when heavy rains caused streams to become swollen and impossible to cross, preventing many from reaching a place of refuge. (CSB)

Cool, wet, sometimes with snow. Food would be scarce too. (TLSB)

**13:19** *such tribulation as has not been* – This suffering, highlighted by the Roman destruction of the temple in AD 70, will eclipse any previous suffering the Israelites experienced. *tribulation.* Persecution, disaster. (TLSB)

**13:20** *the elect.* The people of God. (CSB)

**13:21–22** Counterfeit miracles could mislead people and draw them away from Jesus, the only Savior. Those who believe owe their faith, perseverance, and salvation to the triune God alone. (TLSB)

**13:23** Luther: “For this much is sure: So long as a Christian preacher holds on and sticks to his business, despising the world’s abuse and persecution, the ministry will abide and the Gospel cannot fail; for some will always stand firm and abide, as indeed there must always be some that abide, until Judgment Day” (AE 21:64–65). (TLSB)

**13:14–23** Jesus warns His followers of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, which was fulfilled during the Jewish revolt against the Romans (AD 66–70). These events foreshadowed the end of the world. Jesus tells us these things so that we may be prepared to resist evil and proclaim the Gospel more fervently while we have time to do so. When Jesus returns on the Last Day, He will judge all people. Prior to that glorious and victorious day, evil will erupt and bring destruction. Yet, God holds on to His people throughout these events, anchoring believers in Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit. • “Jerusalem the golden, With milk and honey blest—The promise of salvation, The place of peace and rest—We know not, oh, we know not What joys await us there: The radiancy of glory, The bliss beyond compare!” Amen. (LSB 672:1) (TLSB)

*/The Coming of the Son of Man*

**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.**

**13:24-37** The eschatological section of Mark’s Gospel assigned for this day is the end of a longer discourse from Jesus given to his disciples after they left the temple. They remarked on the beautiful buildings and stones, which prompted Jesus to warn them of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Many try to use these verses to construct predictions of when Jesus’ return will be. Jesus answers the question of when, not by telling the disciples times or definitive signs to prove

the date, but rather by telling them what to do when they encounter certain situations. When you hear . . . do not be alarmed (13:5–8). When they bring you to trial . . . do not be anxious (13:9–13). When you see . . . let those who are in Judea flee (13:14–23; C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible: Mark* [New York: Doubleday, 1986], 527). These do not answer the question of when Jesus will return. Any effort to twist them to that purpose is futile. Rather, these describe the mountaintop in the foreground. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

These verses change context from the near events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem to the more distant events relating to the return of Christ, from the suffering of God's people to their ultimate vindication and victory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**13:24-31** The parallels are found at Matthew 24:29-35 and Luke 21:25-33

In verses 5-13 Jesus gives us a survey of all time from when he was speaking (Tuesday of Holy Week) till the end of the world; in verses 14-23 He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Jewish nation; in verses 24-37 He speaks of His parousia and the very end of the world. (Buls)

Concerning verses 24-31: Nestle Greek text makes this two paragraphs, the signs of the very end and the Parousia; 28-31, the admonitory lesson from the fig tree. Ylvisaker makes three paragraphs: 24-25, premonitions in nature; 26-27 the signs which shall attend the Lord's advent; 28-31, the time for the end. Beck makes verses 21-31 one section, entitled "Jesus is Come," with subparagraphs at 24, 28 and 30. That is worth studying. Very likely the false christs, false prophets, deceiving miracles and wonders refer to the end of the world, not the destruction of Jerusalem. (Buls)

Once again, the text is from Holy Week, probably Holy Tuesday, mere days before the grimmest consequence of the fall, that is, Christ's withering and death, which is to say, mere days before the coming of the world's impossible spring in him resurrected. Thus judgment is as counter-intuitively pregnant with hope as was Jesus' tomb. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:24-25** Juxtaposed to the false hopes which will mislead many of the people in the critical moment is the assurance that the period of suffering and distress will be followed by final redemption when the Son of Man will be manifested in power and glory. *In those days* has no determined temporal value. In verse 24 this phrase designates a period of subsequent to the days of tribulation described in verses 19-20, but the matter of chronological sequence is left imprecise. It is clear from the structure of the discourse that the parousia cannot take place until after all the preliminary events announced in verses 5-23 have occurred. They are the necessary precursors to the coming of the glorified Son of Man, yet in themselves they do not determine the time of that event. (Lane)

The striking of the sun and moon and stars in Israel's history is connected with the Lord humiliating the foreign "gods" the heathen trust (e.g., Joel 2–3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

"In those days" is used repeatedly to indicate the days just before the end (Jer 3:16; Joel 3:1). A qualitative difference can be detected between the events predicted in Mk 13:7–8 and those described here. The intensity of these events is greater, as the creation is shaken to its very foundations, and these occur only once, immediately before the end. The verses are a composite

of Is 13:10; 34:4. Some commentators interpret these verses only symbolically, but there is no reason to doubt that the shaking of the heavenly bodies at the end of days will involve the actual collapse of the created order. See 2 Pet 3:10–11 for ramifications. The events will be so awesome in their glory and so devastating in their power that all attempts at description inevitably fall short. Cranfield's comment is helpful: "An event which we could neatly explain could hardly be the end" (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [Cambridge, 1959] 407). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

As interesting as the details are, one must avoid speculation that leads away from Christian hope and loses itself in predictions of the end or in millennialist fervor. Such errors are all too common. The founder of the Seventh Day Adventists, William Miller, calculated that the return of Christ would take place between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. Many pastors (the author included) received a mailing in 1988 from Edgar Whisenant, who declared September 1988, and then later 1989, as the time of Christ's return. See *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism* (CTCR report, 1989) for millennialism. Dr. Robert L. Rosin's development of Mt 25:31–46 (*Concordia Pulpit Resources* 3/4, pp. 37–39) provides the pastor with excellent guidelines for preparing end times pericopes. "When considering our coming, common inheritance, we need to think in terms of both eschatology and soteriology, linked logically as we think, and theologically as God speaks to us" (p. 37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Ylvisaker: "Jesus here speaks of the immediate premonitions in nature. Nature, both in heaven and on earth, shall pass through such an organic change that it must be obvious to everyone that the end is at hand. The forces of nature shall be transformed so thoroughly that it will be plainly apparent that the old order of things is in the process of dissolution." Then he quotes references from the OT. Lenski: "All that holds the heavenly bodies in their orbits and enables sun, moon, and stars to light the earth, shall give way. Thus the sun's light will be extinguished, the moon's radiance will disappear in the same instant, and the stars will come tumbling from their places. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**13:24 but** – "But" dissociates the destruction of Jerusalem from the end of the world. The disciples and the original readers of Mark could not have identified the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world because of what is said in verse 10 and verses 32-37. The destruction of Jerusalem, of course, was a reminder of the end of the world. "Day" in verse 19 is contrasted to this verse where "day" must have a much wider meaning because we are here dealing with the very end of the world. (Buls)

"But" (*alla*). Immediately after Christ's words about dreadful troubles (v 19), false christs (vv 21–22), and the necessity of the most strenuous vigilance (v 23), comes this "but." What follows is in essence very good news (as v 28 insists). Indeed, this "but" governs all that follows. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*in those days*. A common OT expression having to do with the end time (see Jer 3:16, 18; 31:29; 33:15–16; Joel 3:1; Zec 8:23). (CSB)

The time period right before the end of the world.

"But in those days, after that tribulation [*tēn thlipsin ekeinēn*], the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light." The Lord is quoting himself from Isaiah 13, where the judgment of Babylon is likened to an uncreation of the creatures there. The Creator will himself so undo

Babylon as to make it seem that it had never been. But this, which is poetry (and a taste of the world's end) regarding Babylon, will become reality at the world's judgment, when he who created the universe and continually sustained it, even in its fallen and cursed condition, will in fact uncreate it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jeremiah 3:16 "In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land," declares the LORD, "men will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made."

*sun will be darkened* – No ordinary eclipse. Chaotic, yet a sense of order because God is in control.

Undoing the fourth day of creation (Gen. 1:4) on the Last Day. (TLSB)

"Darkened, . . . will not give its light." We are reminded of the visions of the Revelation, where the darkening of created light is a metaphor for the darkening of spiritual light by demonic powers, as a judgment from God on those who loved darkness rather than light. So, on the Last Day, Christ literally grants to those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness the darkness they desired. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:25** The description in vv. 24–25 does not necessarily refer to a complete breakup of the universe. It was language commonly used to describe God's awful judgment on a fallen world (see Isa 13:10; 24:21–23; 34:4; Eze 32:7–8; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Am 8:9). (CSB)

Cosmic signs of the end (cf Jl 2:10; 3:15). (TLSB)

*stars will be falling* – This does not mean that the universe will break up but it will be a sign of God's awesome judgment.

Ylvisaker: Jesus here speaks of the immediate premonitions in nature. Nature, both in heaven and on earth, shall pass through such an organic change that is must be obvious to everyone that the end is at hand. The forces of nature shall be transformed so thoroughly that it will be plainly apparent that the old order of things is in the process of dissolution. (Buls)

Lenski: All that holds the heavenly bodies in their orbits and enables sun, moon, and stars to light the earth, shall give way. Thus the sun's light will be extinguished, the moon's radiance will disappear in the same instant, and the stars will come tumbling from their places. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Then there will be signs such as are entirely out of the usual course of events in nature; no ordinary eclipses which follow laws and rules framed by God, but a return to chaos . . . There will be a great concussion of the powers of the heavens. The entire universe will go out of joint. The hand of God's providence and government will be withdrawn, and will be dissolved into its component parts. (Buls)

Until then God has promised in Genesis 8:22: "As long as the earth stands, sowing and harvesting, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will not stop." (Beck's translation). Read Luke 17:22 for a comparison between the flood and the end of the world. The unbeliever scoffs at this, just as evolutionists scoff at the doctrine of creation. But Mark 13:31<sup>a</sup>, a restatement of verses 24–25, is a warning to the unbeliever and a comfort to the believer. By the way, verses 24–25 and their parallels rule out any and all ideas of the millenium. (Buls)

Isaiah 13:10 “The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.”

Isaiah 34:4 “All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.”

“And the powers in the heavens will be shaken.” A difficult phrase. We might understand by this the powers and principalities in heavenly places, that is, demonic powers, shaken and, indeed, terrified, by the coming of Christ. That is by no means an unlikely interpretation, but, in this context of the collapse of the natural world, the phrase is probably better understood as speaking of the collapse of elemental powers, such as gravity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

2 Peter 3:10-11 “For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it”

**13:26** *they will see* – optomahee – To gaze with eyes wide open and see Jesus’ full majesty. (QV)

Lenski: Here and in verse 27 'at that time' merely denotes succession, but almost instantaneous succession. (Buls)

Daniel 7:13 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence”

Acts 1:9-11 “After He said this , He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

The verb *opsontai*, “[they] will see,” has no subject (NIV supplies “men”). The context suggests a universally observed event (also Acts 1:9–11; Dan 7:13). Questions arise. How can all see him from the surface of a globe? If the dead have been raised, where will all fit? Such questions are futile, since they apply our temporal circumstances to eternity. What is certain is that believers will lift up their heads (Lk 21:28) in joyful expectation at the sight of the Son of Man. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

*Son of Man*. Beck: "Then people will see the Son of Man." By the way, this verse clearly speaks of the same incident as Daniel 7:13-14. This verse clearly says that the human nature of Christ will fully and brilliantly use all the power and glory of the divine nature. All will see Him thus. The adjective "all" goes with both nouns. "In clouds" is to be taken literally. This verse is a great comfort to the believer and a warning to the unbeliever. (Buls)

“And then *they* will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory” (emphasis added). Since *they* (implied by *opsontai*) must be opposed to *you*, *they* must refer to the pagan world. Of course, disciples as well will witness the appearing, but the appearing is no subjective event, perceived only by the faithful. Here is presented the shock of the naturally minded, seeing the reality that they have to this point avoided and denied. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“The Son of Man.” The Lord is quoting the title he gave himself in Daniel, Ezekiel, and other references. Certainly “the Son of Man” is a divine name, since it is the name of the Messiah, God-with-us. Yet it is the name that emphasizes the human nature of Jesus as the second Adam, the ultimate man, innocent and immortal, that is, man, by the wonder of God’s grace, in triumph. He who will appear is human flesh and blood, one of us and supreme, the one of us who, by the taking up of his humanity into the Godhead, is God, Creator, and Judge. It is the revelation of him who is also a creature (and the first of the new creation) that occasions and causes the end of this creation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus often calls himself the Son of Man, but finally here the full eschatological implications are shown. “And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Dan 7:13–14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*Coming in clouds with great power and glory.* A reference to Christ’s second coming (see 8:38; 2 Th 1:6-10; Rev 19:11-16). (CSB)

“Coming in clouds.” “He makes the clouds his chariot” (Ps 104:3 ESV) because he is Yahweh, coming to deliver his people. But he is also Yahweh the Son of Man, for here is a plain allusion to Daniel’s night vision. It is an allusion and not a quotation because Daniel sees Christ’s ascension, not his second coming; the direction is exactly reversed. At his ascension, Christ goes trailing clouds, as it were, from creation to heaven; at his return he comes from heaven, likewise trailing clouds into creation. The clouds that seem to roof this world simply mark the border crossing. Thus, the world is not roofed over at all, but wide open to (defenseless against?) the divine: To see the clouds is to see his ready chariot. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“With great power and glory.” These are not accoutrements adopted for his triumphal reentry. They are rather his divine attributes from his conception, veiled by the likeness of sinful flesh and not fully used in his state of humiliation, but unveiled in heaven and fully used since his ascension and session. They and we shall see him as he is. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus returns with the Father’s authority to judge the world. (TLNB)

**13:27** *angels.* The angels are always represented as the mighty servants through whom Jesus exerts His will at the end of the world. (Lenski)

*gather his elect.* In the OT God is spoken of as gathering his scattered people (Dt 30:3–4; Isa 43:6; Jer 32:37; Eze 34:13; 36:24). (CSB)

“And then he will send out the angels.” Note that the Son of Man will send out the angels; this man is Lord of glory. His use of angels demonstrates his magnificence as Creator of angels and humanity—not that angels (or human beings) are in any sense necessary to him, but that they reveal the overwhelming life, love, and wealth of one greater than Solomon in all his splendor. Note also his love for his elect, that glorious angels should be sent (as servants; remember the parable of the wedding feast) to summon his beloved to ecstasy. But then, we are God’s children,

whereas they are servant spirits, sent to serve salvation's heirs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"His" angels and "His" elect. It should go without saying that election will not take place then but only the gathering of the elect, both living and dead. Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16. This verse rules out the millenium and the mass conversion of the Jews. Beck paraphrases the last part of the verse well: "From the north, south, east and west, and from one end of the world to the other." A very comforting passage. (Buls)

Jesus tells us that His purpose in coming is to gather the elect to Himself. That removes all fear of the judgment for us. No matter where we are or where our bodies or bones or dust or ashes may lie, the Lord's angels will find us and bring us to Him. (PBC)

1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, "<sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

*from the ends of the earth* – The work of the angels is universal. The ancients used "from the four winds" for the entire world. God's angels will not overlook anyone. See also 1 Thess. 4:16, where the role of the archangel is included. This verse fulfills Mark 8:38, but emphasizes God's care for the faithful. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

"And gather his elect." The subject of the sentence remains Jesus. He gathers his elect. How intimate and personal is the connection between the waiting believers and the coming Lord! And as his elect whom he himself chose before time, called in time, and now gathers by his angels at time's end, how utterly certain (despite the tribulation mentioned just before) is their destiny! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"From the four winds, from the ends of the earth." That is, from all over the globe; none are forgotten. We are reminded of the Great Commission: the saving word has gone out from Zion to all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Here is the fruit of what has been planted. Here he who went out weeping, bearing precious seed, returns rejoicing. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"To the ends of heaven." This might allude to the spirits of the just who will return from heaven with Christ for their resurrection. But the parallels in Deut 30:4 and Neh 1:9 make it plain that the phrase means "to the ends of the skies" or "to the farthest horizons." As it stands, then, this gathering "from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven" vividly pictures the air, earth, and sky thronged with the redeemed, raised and caught up to meet their Lord as the cosmos yields the purpose for which it was made. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Mark 8:38 "if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

1 Thessalonians 4:16 "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first."

**13:24–27** Jesus will return on the Last Day to judge all humanity, fulfilling OT prophecy and His own predictions. No one will enter the kingdom of God by works, nor will any mere religion save anyone. Because Jesus died and rose for us and because the Holy Spirit created and sustained saving faith in His people, we can be sure of our salvation no matter how fearsome the Last Day may be. • Set my heart, O Savior, on the life and hope above, so that shadows of this world may not darken my sight. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Lesson of the Fig Tree*

**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.**

**13:28-29** *tauta*, “these things,” the signs of vv 3–23. These verses interpret what it means when these frightening signs appear. When you see these things happen, they are actually like the fig tree pushing forth its leaves. As those buds are a sure sign summer is near, so the signs show that “he is near, at the very gates” (v 29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part)

**13:28** *the fig tree*. The fig tree, common in the Holy Land, begins to swell along the stem before its leaves start to bud, alerting observers to the coming of summer, the joyous and fruitful time. Likewise, the signs are not intended to frighten Christians, but to heighten our anticipation and motivate continued faithfulness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

“From the fig tree learn its lesson.” A critical verse, which, as suggested above, insists on the evangelical nature of this passage. The disciples have just learned a lesson from a fig tree, namely, that that which is fruitless will be destroyed. In this context of the world’s end, we might expect, then, such a lesson of Law as this: “When you see its leaves wither, you know that winter is near.” But on the contrary (and perhaps to the disciples’ surprise), the lesson is purest Gospel. For the world’s end is, above all, the new world’s beginning. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.” Far from auguring the winter of judgment, for Christ’s disciples, the collapse of the universe is the herald of spring, or, rather (and how much better!), of summer, an even sweeter season of both greenness and fruit. The restoration of all things is near; the better Eden is near, as is the tree of life bearing fruit with its healing leaves. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

We must remember that God does not look at time the way we do. “For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that just has gone by, or like a watch in the night” (Ps. 90:4). From the time the apostles took the gospel out into the world to the destruction of Jerusalem, to the growth of the church, to its persecution from within and without, to the end of all things is one chapter in God’s sight, the final chapter. (PBC)

Assuming that Jesus gave His this instruction just before the Passover, the fig tree would be in the condition described in the parable, its branches tender, its leaves sprouting. By calling the disciples to observe properly what was immediately at hand Jesus reinforced His exhortation to observe what was happening in Jerusalem, and Judea to recognize its significance. (Lane)



Perhaps Jesus stood near a fig tree. Because these trees produce two crops each year, they became proverbial of the seasons. Unlike many tree in Israel, the fig sheds its leaves each fall. New leaves appear relatively late in spring and indicate that warm weather is about to arrive. (TLSB)

The two conditional relative clauses introduced by "whenever" are clearly present general: "Whenever the branch . . . you always realize." "Whenever you see these things happening . . . always realize." Each spring when these things happen, people always realize that summer is near. Each time when Christians see signs, they always must realize that the end is near. He is not speaking of one spring and a few signs. He is speaking of something which is constant in life. The grammars and commentaries fail to point this out. (Buls)

To interpret this verse of the Jews only, the conversion of the Jews, is absurd. The fig-tree was very common in Palestine. It is purely an illustration of spring. Luke, who adds: "and of all the trees" is writing for a larger audience, including Gentiles. The idea is precisely the same. (Buls)

Point of comparison: clear signs alert us as to what is coming. It is implied here, and clearly stated in Luke, that the signs are so clear that no one need tell us what they mean, because they are constantly happening. Even a child understands that. Jesus credits the reader with the intelligence to know that "these things" refers to any and all signs in nature, politics, the family, society and even in the church. Signs are all those things over which we have no control: wars, rumors of war, controversies, inflation, the weather, troubles in families, death, eclipses, etc. The Christian is constantly being reminded by "all." The meaning is plain, He is near, the end is near, He is right at the door. (Buls)

**13:29** *these things*. The signs listed in vv. 5–23 precede the destruction of Jerusalem and/or the end of the age. (CSB)

The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Cf vv 14–23. (TLSB)

“These things . . . he is near.” “These things” are the darkening of the sun and moon, the rain of stars, and the shaking of natural law: When you see these things, they are to be for you like the tender branch and the new leaves, for “summer is near” parallels “he is near.” These things are the evidence of his nearness; he who is the summer and who brings summer to us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

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intelligence to know that "these things" refers to any and all signs in nature, politics, the family, society and even in the church. Signs are all those things over which we have no control: wars, rumors of war, controversies, inflation, the weather, troubles in families, death, eclipses, etc. The Christian is constantly being reminded by "all." The meaning is plain, He is near, the end is near, He is right at the door. (Buls)

The signs are not intended to frighten Christians, but to heighten our anticipation and motivate continued faithfulness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

*it.* Probably a reference to the second coming of Chris. (CSB)

This means the fulfillment of the prophecy of v 2. (TLSB)

*at the very gates* – The application of the parable in this verse places the accent on proximity more vigorously. The catastrophe of sacrilege which will profane the Temple (verse 14) will enable the disciples to know that the destruction of the Temple is imminent in the same manner that the coming of summer is imminent to the moment when the fig tree covers itself with leaves. (Lane)

“At the very gates.” The universe shakes as gates might shake at the knocking of a heavy fist, for, as noted above, it is his very approach in his unveiled great power and glory that occasions and causes earth’s collapse. For “these things” are different in kind from the other signs of his coming. Other signs point to his appearing as the beginning of birth pangs, but with these things comes the birth itself of the new creation. They not only point to but are the evidence of his proximity, from whose face heaven and earth will flee away, whose very presence will destroy the unbelieving world (the ESV glosses 2 Thess 1:9), by whose appearing we shall be changed, for we shall see him as he is. One and the same parousia accomplishes all, as a high wind might level dead trees, but merely prunes living trees of their dead growth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Thus, when we see the world ending, we are to know that “he stands behind our wall, . . . looking through the lattice. . . . [Saying,] ‘Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come’ ” (Song 2:9–12); that is, that the wedding supper of the Lamb is here. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:30** *truly I say to you* – “Truly, I say to you.” This solemn phrase demands that we take what follows quite literally and disallows one interpretation of “generation” “This generation” (*hē genea autē*). How shall we interpret this? Some suggest that we understand the word *generation* in a common English use, meaning “the life span of those now living.” Since Jerusalem was destroyed within the life span of those then living, these interpreters would see the fulfillment of Christ’s words in that destruction, Jerusalem’s fall being understood (rightly) as a sign and symbol of the world’s end. But Christ says, “all these things” must take place and this, coupled with the solemn “truly, I say to you” that introduces the promise, demands not a typical but a literal fulfillment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"I tell you the truth," always used in the Gospels of a solemn noteworthy assertion, plainly indicating Jesus' divinity. Note the very strong expression meaning: "Most certainly not." "Generation" denotes a certain *kind* not a span of time. Beck: "These people will not pass away till all this happens." (Buls)

*generation*. If the term is understood as a normal life span, it may refer either to the generation in which Jesus lived while on earth or to the generation living when these signs begin to occur. (CSB)

Within one generation – c 40 years – the temple would lie in ruins. (TLSB)

“This generation” is troublesome. Cranfield (p. 409) suggests three broad approaches: (1) the primitive church read into Jesus’ teaching apocalyptic ideas that were alien to it; (2) Jesus was mistaken; or (3) a deeper theological understanding is required. After rejecting (1) and (2), what can be done with (3)? One line of reasoning assumes the difficulty lies with “this generation.” Possible meanings include (a) Jesus’ contemporaries; (b) mankind in general; (c) the Jewish people; (d) disciples and followers of Jesus; and (e) the unbelieving generation that demanded a sigh; the same phrase is Mark 8:12. Lenski builds a case for (e). In the OT the Hebrew word for “generation” can indicate a class of men distinguished by a certain moral or spiritual character. Thus God is ‘in the generation of the righteous’ (Ps. 14:5)’ (R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the OT* [Chicago: Moody, 1981 p. 186] (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

Others understand *generation* in a common Hebrew use, meaning “a kind or race of persons,” and apply it to unbelieving humanity in general or to unbelieving Jews in particular. If the latter, then quite apart from the ineluctably anti-Semitic tone, this interpretation would suggest (as the millennialists would have it) that the continued survival of an ethnically Jewish people is in itself more significant than the survival of any other ancient and displaced peoples, as the Romans or the Armenians, that is, as though “God’s Israel” were any other than the Jewish-Gentile Church. But in either case, whether we understand “this generation” to be all unbelievers or Jewish unbelievers (as if Christ were merely telling his disciples, “You will have opposition until the end”—which we already knew from the preceding pericope), the only promise in the promise would be, “I will destroy all unbelievers when I come.” Of course, this is true, but jarringly out of place given the brightly evangelical context, especially of the verses immediately preceding and following. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

It seems far better to understand “this generation” as speaking of the generation to whom he was speaking: “this generation” right here, namely, his disciples, the kind of persons who belong to him, the race generated by the Holy Ghost, who are also themselves the new growth, the fragrance of life, that signals summer’s approach, for they are children of the day (even before the day dawns) and, in their spirits, already a new creation (before the new creation comes), the resurrection of whose spirits anticipates their bodies’ resurrection, and whose faith, seeking another country, already lays claim to the world they will inherit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“This generation will not pass away” is paralleled by “my words will not pass away” (v 31). In both instances, what will not pass away is good. Here is Gospel. The gates of hell will not prevail against this generation. His words, which generate it, will produce their harvest, and it will never perish, nor can anyone pluck it out of his hand. It will be here to be harvested when he appears, and the Son of Man will, in fact, find faith on earth when he comes. And until he comes, this generation will itself be a sign of and witness to his coming. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Ylvisaker: Forced constructions are unnecessary if we accept the word in its literal sense, the generation of the Jews, the Jewish nation. (Buls)

Lenski: This type of Jews will continue to the very Parousia. It has not 'passed away' to this very day. The voice of Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Christ is as loud and vicious as ever: 'He is not the Messiah, not the Son of God!' Here, therefore, is Jesus' own answer to those who expect a final national conversion of the Jews either with or without the fiction of a millenium. (Buls)

Kretzmann: This people, the nation that had rejected Him, should not cease to be a distinct race of people, separate from all the rest, until Christ's coming in glory would take place. They should remain as a standing testimony and proof of the truthfulness of Christ's words. (Buls)

Hendriksen: The expression 'all this' covers the events predicted for the entire dispensation, including even the final tribulation and the Lord's glorious return. (Buls)

A second line of reasoning assumes the difficulty is in "all these things." The reference could be to (a) the destruction of the temple 40 years late in A.D. 70; (b) Christ's passion and resurrection ; or (c) the start of all the signs, but necessarily the end itself. Cranfield (p. 409) opts for (c). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

This clearly designates the contemporaries of Jesus. Jesus solemnly affirms that the generation contemporary with His disciples will witness the fulfillment of His prophetic word, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dismantling of the Temple. (Lane)

Since "generation" (*genea*) may be understood either literally or symbolically, this verse has had many interpretations. The context clarifies. The key to understanding v 30 is its shared use of *tauta* ("these things") from v 29. V 29 uses *tauta* in context of the parable of the fig tree. There it refers to the observations of the budding fig leaves. The budding leaves are a sign that summer is soon to follow. So the *tauta* of v 29 refers to the troubles that will befall believers whom Jesus describes in vv 3–23. The *tauta* of v 30 refers to those same troubles from the first part of the chapter, because it would be impossible for *tauta* to refer to the final consummation. If *tauta* meant the consummation of all things, it could not be the sign that the consummation is sure to come. This is verified by Jesus' clear rejection of a definable time frame in vv 32–36 (Larry W. Hurtado, *New International Biblical Commentary: Mark* [Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1989], 223). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**13:31** *my word will never pass away* – This relates also to Jesus' teachings which are going to be good for all time. We can always depend on God's Word.

Heaven." That is, the skies and, as we should say, space. "Heaven and earth will pass away," with all sin, sorrow, and death. Christ urges his disciples not to be afraid, but rather to lift up their heads as their redemption draws near. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"My words." That is, the words of Yahweh, by which the worlds were made and are upheld, by which the present earth is reserved for fire, by which the paradise ahead will arise, and by which his elect are chosen, called, sanctified, and kept till the appearing of the salvation that is about to be revealed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

The central climax: while everything else is fleeting and temporary, Jesus' Word and promises are everlasting. Christians can be confident, because their vindication is promised and sure. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Isaiah 40:8 states that the Word of God remains forever. By making the reference personal, Jesus identifies His words with God's. This is best understood as referring to all of His teaching (cf. Matthew 5:18; Luke 16:17; Ps. 119:89; Is. 55:11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

The declaration of verse 30 is strengthened by the assertion which follows. Verse 31 has its background in the OT where the enduring quality of God and His Word is contrasted with the only apparent durability of the created universe (cf. Ps. 102:25-27; Is 40:6-8; 51:6). While heaven and earth will be cataclysmically destroyed, Jesus' word is established forever. This claim of high dignity for Jesus' words implies a Christological affirmation: what is said of God in the OT may be equally affirmed of Jesus and His word. The prophecy on Olivet will surely come to pass. (Lane)

Isaiah 40:8 “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”

The Word of God, which spoke creation into being, will last longer than creation. It is eternal. (TLSB)

*The Day and Hour Unknown*

**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.”**

The gospel of Mark presents the mission, ministry, and message of Jesus Christ anticipating that the Holy Spirit will lead the reader to conclude that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. This is, of course, the ultimate purpose of all Scripture. God would have all people acknowledge their sinfulness and accountability to God according to the law. But more than that, God desires that all people be brought to saving faith in his Son, the God-Man Jesus Christ, through the gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The text points to the face-to-face encounter of the reader with the Lord, whether it be at the Second Coming of Christ or at death prior to the Second Coming. For the unbeliever, the words of the text are a call to repentance. For the believer, they are an exhortation to continual repentance and preparation for the day when he or she will meet the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The Nestle-Aland text<sup>1</sup> treats Mark 13:33–37 as a unit. Vv 33–34 are separated by a wider space than the other verses in the unit, indicating that v 33 introduces the theme of the section while vv

34–37 expand on the theme. The UBS text<sup>2</sup> and the NIV include v 32 as part of the unit. In the original Greek autograph, the verses and sections would not have been separated at all; the divisions in Nestle-Aland and UBS are modern interpretations. Whether Mark intended v 32 to be a part of the unit or not, it does provide information that is helpful in interpreting the text. Jesus informs his hearers that the exact time of his Second Coming is known only to the Father and not to the angels or the Son (according to his human nature). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The evangelist Mark tells the story of Jesus with machine-gun speed and cutting poignancy. The passages at hand are loaded with imperatives for all generations of Christ's followers. On the back side of this text, false compassion for the poor (14:4-9) leads Jesus to remind His followers that the true worship of God is primary to any God-pleasing acts of compassion. In the text the disciples wonder when the temple will be destroyed, but Jesus answers them with regard to His own return (13:21, 26). Sadly, when the disciples are called upon to keep a watch in the next chapter (14:34, 38), they are unable and, therefore, not prepared for the events of Christ's passion that soon come. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

In Mark 13, when a disciple admires Jerusalem's magnificent temple, Jesus predicts destruction. Shocked like those who saw its first destruction centuries ago, Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask the question: When will it happen, and how will we know before it happens (v 4)? Then Jesus describes Christian pilgrimage in a sinful world, the destruction of the temple, and the coming of the end. He sums up the disturbing predictions with the pronouncement, "This generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (v 30 ESV), while promising that his words remain forever. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

After stating the signs belonging to these three kinds of events, Jesus answers the question "When?" "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (v 32 ESV). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Asserting that the disciples, or any future believer, would not discern the time of his coming by the events that must occur, Jesus calls disciples to a life of faith in the certain expectation of his return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:32-37** The four imperatives in the text have to do with attentiveness and watchfulness. The first admonition in v 33, (*blepete*, literally, "Keep watching" (NIV: "Be on guard"; RSV: "take heed") occurs throughout Mark's gospel and is translated in different ways in Mk 4:24; 8:15; 12:38, coming to a climax in chapters 13 and 14. Here Jesus is preparing his disciples for the changes that would come with his imminent crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (Mk 13:5, 9, 23, 33, 35,37; 14:34, 38). Synoptic parallels are found in Mt 24:36–44; 25:13; Lk 21:34–36. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

*Blepete* (v 33), together with *agrupneite* (vv 33) and *grēngoreite* (vv. 35, 37), all bear the sense of being on the lookout, perceptive, on guard, and watchful. The present active imperatives denote continuing action rather than a one-time event. If these imperatives are to be something more than demands of the Law, one must press them further. To what object are we being alerted? For what does one watch? When it is seen, will we recognize it? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Gospel light dawns on those questions as one considers Mt 24:4, 26; Lk 8:18; 21:8; Acts 13:40; 20:31; 1 Cor 8:9; 10:18; 16:10; 2 Cor 10:7; Gal 5:15; Eph 5:15; 6:18; Phil 3:2; Col 2:8; Heb 3:12;

12:25; 13:17; 2 In 1:8; and Rev 3:2. For the most part, those passages urge attentiveness to the content of faith (*fides quae*) so that the believer's faith (*fides qua*) has its readiness in Christ. Faith is the sum of its contents: Christ. To keep watch means to be attentive to the specifics which Christ breathes into our thoughts, words, and deeds—which is the real intent behind watching one's doctrine (1 Tim 4:16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The force of these imperatives is not an admonition to strain one's neck to see into the future. Rather, it is an encouragement to look diligently into the Word, which will never pass away (Mk 13:3 1). One who watches for Christ there is ready. Present action and future bliss will surely follow. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Thus we must take note that the Gospel in the narrow sense, God's work for humankind in Christ, is not explicit in this pericope. The Gospel is implicit in the object for which one watches: Jesus Christ as he comes in his words of Spirit and life. The Christian congregation must not hear merely the admonition to watch, but must be assured that their readiness is in Christ. Luther illustrates this admirably in his exposition of Ps 127:1b, "Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain" (Luther's Works 45:328–31). He notes that "one of two things must necessarily follow when we rely on our own watchfulness: either arrogance or worry." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

**13:32** *No one knows.* A map of the future would be a hindrance, not a help, to faith. Certain signs have been given, but not for the purpose of making detailed, sequential predictions. (CSB)

The verse begins with a strong adversative conjunction, meaning "but" or "however." Up to this point Jesus had said much about the many signs which would precede the end of the world. Christians can read those signs. But they don't know the time of the end and Christ's appearing. Here Jesus is limiting His thoughts on knowledge of that day and hour. (Buls)

"Hour" is the Greek word for the smallest measurement of time. Actually, it is less than our English word "hour." It means "the specific time within a day." "No human being" is absolute. Note that the text reads "knows." There are two types of knowing. Look at the two usages at Matthew 24:43.

There "know" means "realize" on the basis of what Jesus had said. It denotes bestowed knowledge. But "know" here means inherent knowledge, to know on one's own. (Buls)

Back to Mark 13:32. No one knows on his own. And the context clearly means that no one is going to tell him either. Note "no-not-nor." Of our ten translations only RSV and NIV translate "not even-nor-but only." These Notes prefer NEB: "not even-not even-only." (Buls)

This verse answers the original twofold question: When will this occur, and how can the time of the event be predicted (v 4)? Christ does not speak about the temple in vv 32–36, but about the parousia, *that day* (*tēs hēmeras ekeinēs*). Our Lord refers to the great eschatological event of his return (Joel 3:18; Amos 8:3, 9, 13; Micah 4:6; Zeph 1:14–18; 3:16; Zech 9:16; Mt 25:13 [the day]; Jn 6:40 [the Last Day]; 1 Cor 5:5 and 2 Pet 3:10 [the day of the Lord]; Rev 16:14 [the great day]). He also addresses the possibility of recognizing the specific time of that day ("the hour," *tēs hōras*). "No one knows," *oudeis oiden* (perfect active indicative). From the past continuing to the present moment, the faithful, the angels beholding the Father, and the Son do not know. He corrects the fascination of those attempting to date Christ's return by correlating predictive prophecy and current events. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus speaks here as a man. In His state of humility, Jesus did not always speak from His divine power or foreknowledge. (TLSB)

*that hour.* An OT expression for the day of the Lord's appearance (Am 8:3, 9, 13; 9:11; Mic 4:6; 5:10; 7:11), referring to the coming of the Son of Man (v. 26). (CSB)

*tēs ēmeras ekeinēs,* "that day," recalls similar Old Testament promises of a future manifestation of God redeeming his people (e.g., Amos 9:11–15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*angels.* Hendricksen: The angels, though intimately associated with the events pertaining the second coming (Matthew 13:41; 24:31; Revelation 14:19), do not know the day nor the hour. (Buls)

"In heaven" is adjectival, telling us what kind of angels, not adverbial, telling us where they are. It means "the heavenly angels" or "the holy angels." What really surprises us here is that the Son does not know the day or the precise time. The point, of course, is that if the holy angels and the Son do not know, how can anyone else, any other human being; possibly know? Read Matthew 24:44. The Son of Man will come at a moment when NOBODY is expecting Him. (Buls)

But how can it be said that the Son, which indicates Jesus' divinity (the term), does not know? We quote a passage from Pieper, CHRISTIAN DOGMATICS, vol. II, p. 163: (Buls)

Alongside this divine knowledge of Christ, which in His state of humiliation He had according to His human nature, Scripture ascribes to Him limited knowledge (Luke 2:52; Mark 13:32). It predicates of Him, according to His human nature, a two-fold knowledge: the knowledge communicated by the divine nature to the human nature by virtue of the personal union, and the knowledge peculiar to the human nature as its natural essential attribute. The former is infinite while the latter is finite and capable of growth. (Buls)

And on page 164:

But how could there exist in one and the same Person both limited knowledge and divine omniscience? In the same way as there was in one and the same Person both omnipotence and limited power, indeed feebleness and death. As divine omnipotence, so also divine omniscience did not always become operative in the human nature; it was active only so far as it was necessary for the performance of Christ's office. Divine omniscience, for example, did not become functional with regard to the day and hour of the end of the world, since the Day of Judgment is not to be published upon earth, but, according to God's plan, is to remain hidden from men. (Buls)

For other statements on this same mystery, read Pieper, vol. II, pages 146, 207, and 285. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: Not for a moment did He cease to be God. He did not empty Himself of a single divine attribute, albeit these attributes were not employed. In the state of His humiliation He was the servant of God to effect our salvation, and as such He has never used His divine glory to glorify Himself, but always in obedience to His Father's will, and in the service of His office. The work of His calling set up a limitation in the use of the divine attributes which had been communicated to His true nature. This is true of His omnipotence, as also of His omniscience. But it is not a part



of His office to know the hour for the end of the world. This is a part of the Father's world-dominion. (Buls)

And we must remember that Jesus is here speaking from the point of view of His humiliation. Jesus speaks in this verse of *The Son* and *The Father*. Both are true God, two persons in the same divine essence. He does not say "My Father" or "Your Father." He is stressing the divinity of both the Father and Himself, and yet, according to His humanity He does not know the day or the moment of His second coming. (Buls)

Just one more thought: Read Luke 10:22 in Greek. There "my" denotes Jesus' human nature. All things have been given to Jesus' human nature by the Father. Therefore, the human nature of Christ "knows" the Father. At Luke 10:22 a form of "know" (bestowed knowledge) is used. But here, in Mark 13:32, a form of (inherent knowledge) is used. Implicit in this verse is the fact that Jesus became a human being just like me except that He was sinless. We forget too easily the He is *HUMAN* and that He is the most attractive human being who ever lived. (Buls)

Mark 13:32 rules out each and every attempt on the part of human beings to predict a day, or time of day, when Christ will come again. People who claim to be able to predict this, claim to know more than the God-man did in His state of humiliation. They are victims of self-delusion and anyone who follows them is likewise deluded. (Buls)

*nor the Son.* † While on earth, in his state of humiliation, Jesus did not normally use his divine wisdom (cf. Php 2:6–11). (CSB)

Luke 12:40, "You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

1 Thessalonians 5:2, "for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

Revelation 16:15, "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

*only the Father* – God knows His plans and reveals what He chooses to whom He chooses. (TLSB)

**13:33-37** These verses employ the literary device of *inclusio*. The passage both begins and ends with similar words and ideas. (Other biblical examples include the Hebrew of Is 53:6 and Ps 134.) V 33 begins with imperatives which are synonyms of the imperative concluding v 37. This observation would support the arrangement of the Nestle-Aland text over that of the UBS text. The use of four imperative forms of three different verbs in vv 33–37 emphasizes the urgency of the call to watchfulness and preparation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Jesus spoke the words of our text during Holy Week. It was Passover time. Crowds filled Jerusalem. Jesus spent many hours teaching, almost continuously confronting the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees (see Matthew 23). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Jesus and his disciples withdrew to the relative peace and quiet of the western slope of the Mount of Olives, with its full view of the city and the temple. The disciples took in the scene admiringly. Jesus used this setting for an eschatological address. The Temple would be totally destroyed

(except for the Wailing Wall, which was not part of the temple proper, but a supporting wall of the outer courtyard). He tells of fear-filled times. The suffering will become so extreme that God's people will plead, "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down" (Is 64:1) to put an end to these evils. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Jesus gives a sweeping view of the New Testament age, pointing to the end of earthly time and the beginning of the eternal state. This world is rocking along toward its determined conclusion. When will that be? Most of the chapter is Jesus' answer to the disciples' question in v 4. No one knows, save the Father. He set the time; nothing can hurry or postpone it. No one can trigger or foretell it. But it will come, with absolute devastation (2 Peter 3). Therefore, watch! Be prepared! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Mark 13 is the longest uninterrupted speech, and the only extended discourse by Jesus recorded by Mark. The pivotal chapter serves as the bridge between Jesus' public ministry (Mark 1–12) and the narrative of his passion (14–16). It is a farewell discourse in which Jesus prepares his disciples for the period of suffering and confusion that will ensue before his return in glory. The recurring theme is that the disciples are ever to remain prepared for the end. They must not be deceived into thinking prematurely that the end has already come (vv 5–8), nor be overcome with despair at the woes they will endure (vv 9–27), nor be lulled into complacent slumber by the duration of time before his return (vv 28–37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Jesus describes the signs of the end. From our perspective, the destruction of the temple was accomplished long ago (A.D. 70), but Jesus cautions us not to jump to the conclusion that the end has already come (v 8). Most of the signs have been visible throughout history, though to varying degrees in different periods and locations, and they are likely to continue until the end. Some, like persecution, will intensify further before the final state. The message of all the signs is not when the end will come, but that the end will come. "Vigilance rather than calculation is required of the disciples and of the Church" (William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974] 448). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

**13:33** *be on guard be alert* –A number of words relay a sense of urgency in this text. There are two of them in this verse. *Blepete* is translated "look" or "watch!" is also used in vv 5, 9, 23. This term is used as well in 12:38, which may be read as the beginning of the entire discourse. *agrupneite*, literally "chase sleep away," is translated as "be alert." These words, as well as the duplication of thought from the previous verses, set the tone of urgency which this text carries. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

"Take heed, look out, beware, stop and think!" It's like a red traffic light that makes us stop and think. It occurs at Mark 13:5,9,23. Read those verses. In verse 5 it is a warning not to follow the many false Christs who will come in Christ's name. In verse 9 it is a warning not to be offended when persecution, suffering for Jesus' sake, comes. In verse 23 it is a warning not to believe in the false Christs and false prophets who will perform miracles and wonders which are so impressive that, if possible, they mislead even the elect. Here in verse 33 it is a warning not to fall victim to spiritual stupor. (Buls)

"Be alert!" literally means "stay awake at all times." Many think that the variant "and always pray" is textual. If not textual, it is implicit. Here read Matthew 25:13-15; Luke 19:12ff; Luke 21:36; Ephesians 6:18. Many other passages could be cited. But the last sentence in Mark 13:33 gives the reason for the two present imperatives.(Buls)

"You" introduces an explanatory clause. Jesus is concerned about **YOU**, plural. You don't know, nor will anyone, not even God, tell you. "What that time will come" introduces an indirect question. People constantly ask "When will the exact time be?" Jesus says: "You don't know." NASB translates "the appointed time." NEB has "the moment." The fact that the "time" is absolutely unknown implies the deep sinfulness of human nature. Even the most devout Christian would likely become lax if he would know the time. The fact that the "time" is unknown is for our good. It is not a liability. (Buls)

By the way, this text is not about justification but about sanctification. I am not responsible for my justification, for that is an accomplished fact. When Jesus says "watch and pray", He is not saying: "Save yourself" for that has already been done. Faith in the atonement does not mean that I cling to Him but that He has me safely in His hand. John 10:28; Romans 8:38,39. I needn't worry about or doubt that. But, sanctification makes me responsible for myself, under God, Who gives me all needed strength through the means of grace to be faithful. Even the watching and the staying awake is a gift of God. Faith in Christ makes me spiritually alive. I am a new creature. The Gospel gives me Christian freedom. It does not allow me to live according to the flesh. Now the Law says to me: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" Galatians 5:13-14. Someone has said that sanctification means to take justification seriously. (Buls)

The critical apparatuses in both Nestle-Aland and UBS note a variant addition which is included in a footnote in the NIV and in the text of the NKJV: "Watch! Stay awake *and pray!*" Some scholars maintain that if the words "and pray" were original, they would not have dropped out of some of the key manuscripts. On the other hand, others argue that the words were added to harmonize the verse with such passages as Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38; and Eph 6:18. In general, the best reading is usually the one that is shorter, more difficult, and that can explain the existence of the other readings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The NIV translates the first word "Be on guard!" Other translations include "Take heed" (NASB, RSV, and NKJV), "Be alert" (NEB), and "Be on watch" (TEV). The Greek lexicon BAGD (p 143) provides the translation "take heed." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Theodore J. Weeden in his chapter entitled "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel" (in *The Interpretation of Mark*, ed. William Telford, p 69) points out that the imperative translated "Be on guard!" (NIV) is "a Marcan key word" that introduces the four sections of Mark 13 that begin at vv 5, 9, 23, and 33. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The NIV and TEV translate the second Greek word "Be alert!" Other translations are "keep on the alert" (NASB), "watch" (RSV) (NKJV), and "be wakeful" (NEB). BAGD (p 14) translates it as "be on the alert." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The verb *grēgoreō* (NW: "watch") in vv 34, 35, 37 means "be/keep awake," or spiritually, "be on the alert, be watchful" (BAGD p. 167). The physical and spiritual meanings are combined in Gethsemane (Mk 14:34,37-38). It is a close synonym of *agrupneō* in v 33. The four time periods mentioned in v 35 are the four watches into which the night is divided in the Roman way of reckoning time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The first verse of our text unmistakably calls us to faithful alertness, while highlighting the folly of those who arrogantly claim to know the date. Reference can be made to modern heretical sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. The numbers and symbols in Daniel and Revelation, and the signs in Mark 13, are not intended to reveal the secret

God has reserved for himself. The message they convey to us is that God is in control, working judgment and salvation, and nothing will defeat his purposes. To insist on trying to discover the secret is sinful. The child of God leaves time in the hands of him who loved us and sent his Son in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4). V 35 of our text reinforces this. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The two imperatives in v 33 reinforce each other. *Blepō*, “see” (NIV, loosely: “Be on guard”) can refer to physical eyesight, but often refers to mental perception: “direct one’s attention, consider, note, take care” (BAGD p. 143, 4.a). Many who see will not see, that is, will not understand the significance of the signs (Mt 13:13). *Agrupneō* can literally mean “keep oneself awake,” or figuratively, “be alert, keep watch.” Rom 13:11 is a close parallel to our verse. It’s time to wake up! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

How should the faithful respond to the words of Jesus? Look! Watch! (*blepete, agrupneite*). Both words are commands requiring continual action (present active imperative). The uncertainty of “when” and the inability to discern the hour of “when” requires a continual expectation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Regarding the command “Be on guard!” (literally “look,” *blepete*), in ch 13 (vv 5, 9, 23, 33) the word occurs four times, each punctuating a warning. “Look!” is followed by the cause for looking: first, look “that no one leads you astray” (v 5 ESV); second, look to yourselves, for “they will deliver you over” (v 9 ESV); third, look, I have told you before it happens (v 23); and fourth, look, “you do not know when the time will come” (v 33 ESV). Christ’s four *look* warnings regard faith and may be applied as first, be continually guarding against false doctrine; second, be prepared to suffer for your faith; third, do not doubt God while suffering; and fourth, do not doubt in the promised return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“Be alert!” (*agrupneite*, literally “watch!”) admonishes against doubting that the promised return is indeed coming, and coming unexpectedly. You will not recognize the time until it is upon you. *ouk oidate* [perfect] *gar pote ho kairos estin* [present]. In fact, seeking for the chronological moment (*ho chronos*) will lead you astray. You will not even know the *ho kairos*, the fullness of time for that day. Any attempt to discern the hour of Christ’s return is fruitless. This is not how believers watch. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*the time* - Translations of *ho kairos* include “that time” (NIV), “the appointed time” (NASB), “the moment” (NEB), and “that time” (RSV, TEV, and NKJV). BAGD (p 395) describes the Greek word as “one of the chief eschatological terms” and provides the translation “the time of crisis, the last times.” The Greek lexicon of Thayer (p 318) translates the word “the time when things are brought to a crisis, the decisive epoch waited for.” He interprets the term as a reference to “the time when the Messiah will visibly return from heaven.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

*Kairos*, “time,” can be a general term for any time, or it can refer to a favorable time. Often it is particularly “the time of crisis, the last times” of the New Testament age (BAGD p. 395, 3.). Here and in Mt 8:29; Rev 1:3; 22:10, it has the narrower meaning of Judgment Day itself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

No one knows when the events Jesus prophesied will take place; therefore, Christians are to focus on the work He has given them (Mt. 9:38). Augustine: “Let no one then search out for the last

Day, when it is to be; but let us watch all by our good lives, lest the last day of any one of us find us unprepared” (NPNF1 6:411). (TLSB)

Augustine is quoted as saying, “Let no one then search out for the Last Day, when it is to be; but let us watch all by our good lives, lest the last day of any one of us find us unprepared.” (TLSB)

Rather than wasting time and energy trying to determine the exact year or day of Jesus’ return, which God has not revealed, we should focus on bringing the Gospel to people who do not yet know Christ as Savior and Lord. (TLSB)

1 Thessalonians 5:5-6, “You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.”

1 Peter 5:8-9, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

Revelation 3:11, “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”

**13:34-37** Rather than wasting time and energy trying to determine the exact year or day of Jesus’ return, which God has not revealed, we should focus on bringing the Gospel to people who do not know Christ as Savior and Lord. (TLSB)

**13:34-35** Jesus relates a parable, found only in Mark’s gospel, to highlight the urgency of remaining alert. Jesus is the master of the house who “went away on a journey.” The noun *apodēmos* occurs only here, but the verb *apodēmeō*, “go away on a journey,” occurs in the Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants (Mt 21:33–44) and the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14–30). Lk 19:12 adds that the master went away in order to receive a kingdom; we think of Christ’s ascension and session or enthronement at the Father’s right hand as his “journey away,” though he is still very much with us in Word and Sacrament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

In all these parables the servants are to work diligently even though the master is absent, because he surely will return and call them to account. Those who remain faithful will be rewarded bountifully. Those who use the master’s absence as an excuse to do what they please, or nothing at all (the buried talent), will be punished severely. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

In the Parable of the Talents, different servants received different amounts of money, “each according to his ability” (Mt 25:15). So in our text, authority is given to each to do “his assigned task” (v 34). This ties in with Luther’s doctrine of vocation. We prepare for our Lord’s return by carrying out the roles and responsibilities given us—as husband or wife; parent or child; employee or boss; friend, neighbor, citizen; pastor or parishioner. No one is called to do everything; each is called to perform specific service in our particular station in life, and by doing so diligently, we remain awake and alert, ready for the end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The pastor's job resembles that of the doorkeeper in v 34 who guards against danger from outside and is the first to alert everyone in the house that the master is returning. Similarly, in Ezek 3:16-21 God appoints the prophet to be a "watchman" who stands on the city wall, scanning the horizon for danger, warning the inhabitants, and turning them to righteousness. In light of Jesus' charge "to everyone: 'Watch!'" (v 37), every Christian is a "watchman." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

**13:34** *it* – The "it" here is implied, and seems to have the action of the owner returning in v. 35 as its referent. In a larger context the implied "it" refers back to v. 4, when Jesus' disciples request specific information on the destruction of the temple. Jesus answers the question about a more important "it," the coming of the Son (vv. 21, 26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

This verse contains a short parable. The departing master (Jesus Christ) leaves, giving his servants authority to do his work (see Mt 28:18–20; Mk 16:15). He emphatically charges the doorkeeper to watch and keep watching (*eneteilato hina grēgorēi* [present active subjunctive]) until the unknown time of return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"each with his work." While the servants were to be alert for the doorkeeper's call, they each had their own work to do. This work could not be accomplished if they were perpetually scanning the horizon. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*man going on a journey* – The absent householder is peculiar to Mark. A journeying master delegated authority to his servants and assigned each to his work, specifying that the doorkeeper is to watch. These details recall a familiar early Christian pattern of exhortation stressing vigilance and an application of the vigilance concept to the Christian ministry in terms of work and labor. The true servant will want to be actively engaged in his Master's service when he returns. (Lane)

Here Jesus uses an illustration or a little parable. Notice that we have two subordinate participles and one main verb. The stress, therefore, lies on the verb. Most of our translations do not preserve this arrangement. The only two which do are RV (1901) and NASB. The former reads: "It is as when a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch." And the latter: "It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. (Buls)

Jesus is the "man going away." This denotes his Ascension and removal of His visible presence. Salvation is an accomplished fact. "Going away" does not mean that He abandoned the Church but that He made its work the responsibility of the Christians, as is explained from "in charge" and "his task." Christ has given "a task" to all His servants, and in particular to each one his own particular task. All Christians, be they men, women or children, have particular tasks and responsibilities. (Buls)

But the main thought runs from the last "to keep watch," in this context. Note that forms "to be watchful" occur three times, verses 34, 35, 37. It is the key word in this text. (Buls)

In illustration there is only one doorman. He is the first person the "one going away" would see and meet when he returns. In application, in the next verse, the idea of the doorman watching is

not singular but plural. There is a sense in which all of us must consider ourselves doormen, the very first whom Christ will meet when He returns. (Buls)

A more literal translation of the phrase “puts his servants in charge” (NIV, RSV) would be “having given his slaves the authority.” Other English versions include “putting his slaves in charge” (NASB), “gave authority to his servants” (NKJV), and “leaves his servants in charge” (TEV). The word *exousia*, “charge,” is the same word translated as “authority” in Matt 28:18, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” The Greek word for “servants” indicates that they were owned by the man who went on the trip. The people in his house were his possessions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

*door keeper to stay awake* – to Thuroro refers to the doorkeeper who is given the special responsibility to watch. Several commentators make reference to the common problem of slaves who habitually slept on the job while watching the main door to a dwelling. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

“The one at the door” (NIV) has the assignment “to keep watch.” Fritz Rienecker (*A Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, p 126) describes the doorkeeper as “the one who stood guard at the entrance of a courtyard which served several houses.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

**13:35, 37** Verses 35 and 37 again repeat the command to watch continually (*grēgoreite*, present active imperative) so that you are not caught sleeping. The temptation will be to sleep. The command is given to watch. Like a doorkeeper who cannot possibly discern the master’s time of return from circumstances around him, we watch for the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:35** *stay awake* – *gragoreite* is translated “you watch out.” This continues the imperative urgency with which the passage drips. Jesus warns against being inattentive during the hour Roman watches of the night. Oddly, this is the time when most would rest from the labors of the day, but Jesus strongly encourages attentiveness to the task, even during the night. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

"Therefore" introduces the application. It means: "In view of the fact that the Lord has ascended into heaven and assigned to each Christian his individual task." Now the imperative is plural "you (plural) keep on watching." The stress is not on the last day but careful living each and every day. Like the disciples after Jesus ascended into heaven. Read Acts 1:12-2:47 and the rest of Acts for that matter. Christ warned them not to sit around wondering about times and seasons, Acts 1:7. They went about their daily Christian tasks and living. (Buls)

Back to Mark 13:35: The "because" clause explains why they should be watchful. Now Christ identifies Himself as "the owner of the house." He means that He owns every thing and has entrusted the "house" to the church on earth. (Buls)

*grēgoreite* (also vv 34, 37) suggests being roused to watchfulness. The doorkeeper’s job was to stay awake watching (v 34). The same command is given us in v 37. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

The Greek verb *grēgoreō*, “watch” is to be understood metaphorically as “give strict attention to, be cautious, active; to take heed lest through remissness and indolence some destructive calamity overtake one” (Thayer, p 122). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The Greek word for “owner, master” is *kurios*, “lord, Lord.” In the New Testament the word is used most often in reference to Jesus Christ. The Septuagint uses the word to translate the Hebrew words *YHWH*, “Yahweh, the LORD,” and *adonai*, “Lord.” For example, compare the Septuagint of Ps 109:1 with the Hebrew of Ps 110:1. Robert Bratcher (*A Translator’s Guide to The Gospel of Mark*, p 182) understands that the owner of the house “is obviously a figure for the Son of Man, but the text itself does not make the identification explicit.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

As we know not the time of our death, and no man can reveal it to us, duty and interest require that we should so live as to be always ready. Then, whether we dies suddenly or after lingering illness, no sooner shall we be “absent from the body,” than we shall be “present with the Lord,” beholding His glory and rejoicing in the fullness of His love. (CB)

*in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.* The four watches of the night used by the Romans. (CSB)

The last part of the sentence is illustration. The four adverbs denote the four watches of the night, according to Roman reckoning: 6-9; 9-12; 12-3; 3-6. The point in using "night" watches does not mean, of course, that Christ's return will necessarily occur at night. The point is twofold: the doorman would never expect the absent owner to return at night. And, even if he did, he wouldn't know in which watch he would return. The point, in application, is the same which Jesus has made three times in this text, verses 32, 33 and 35: the day and time of day is totally unknown to mankind. (Buls)

Matthew 24:43, “But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.”

**13:36** *come suddenly* – "If" introduces a negative purpose clause. The point of "comes suddenly" is the same as that of Luke 21:34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth." The Last Day is not a trap. It will come "as a trap" which means "suddenly, without prior notice." Strictly speaking, in illustration the doorkeeper was to stay awake twenty-four hours of the day. That is contrary to nature. Who could do that? But there was only one doorkeeper in illustration. In application Jesus says it would be awful if He were to find you (plural) sleeping spiritually. The faithful Christian is watchful even in his sleep. That's why we can pray: "If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." (Buls)

Luke 21:34, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.”

Romans 13:11, “And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.”



1 Thessalonians 5:6, “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.”

**13:37** *to everyone watch* – Jesus, the master orator, punctuates this discourse with the term *gragoreite*, “You watch!” This term is again used, tying the passage together into a complete package. . In a significant way, Jesus offers a reminder that this message is not only to his present disciples but also to all of Christ’ followers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

"And that which I say to you, I say to all: 'Constantly be watchful.'" The antecedent of "to you" is the Apostles. The antecedent of "to all" is all Christians of all ages. "I say," which denotes a formal statement, is used twice for emphasis. Note once more how forms of "watch" pervade this text: verses 34,35, 37. Nothing is so necessary as constant, Christian living. That involves the proper use of Law and Gospel. That involves constantly hearing God's Word. That involves constant faith in Christ and love toward neighbor. (Buls)

There are two things over which we should not fret: (Buls)

- a. Our **salvation** is an accomplished fact. Forgiveness of sins and everlasting life are ours in Christ.
- b. The **time** of the Last Day. Only the Father knows that.

But there is one thing which must be our constant concern: Watchfulness. That does not mean that we live in fear. Jesus says at Luke 21 :28: "When these (signs) begin to take place, look up and lift up your heads because your deliverance is nearing." And the Christian prays the prayer of Revelation 22:20: "Come, Lord Jesus." But he lives his life by the faith in the Son of God Who loved him and gave Himself for him. Galatians 2:20. (Buls)

The rationalistic higher critics have done great harm to Mark 13. Some say that Jesus, as a child of His day who knew no better, thought that Judgment Day would come at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Others say that originally Mark 13 was written as a warning that the end would come in 70 A.D. The former thought denies the divinity of Jesus and the inspired nature of His Word. The latter thought is in direct violation of verses 32, 33 and 35. Furthermore, in that case, verse 37 says nothing to people after 70 A.D. We shall waste no more notes on their stupidity. (Buls)

According to Mark 13:3, Jesus was speaking to Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Yet in Mark 13:37, Jesus indicates that the message was intended for “everyone” (NIV, NEB), for “all” (NASB, RSV, TEV, and NKJV). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Remain alert to proclaim the Gospel and practice the faith. Augustine says, “When it tells us to watch for the last day, every one should think of [this] as concerning his own last day; lest haply when you judge or think the last day of the world to be far distant, you slumber with respect to your own last day” (NPNF 1 6:411). (TLSB)

The imperative “take heed, be vigilant” in verse 33 and the related call to “watch” in verses 35, 37 furnish a climax to the exhortations of verses 5, 9, and we. The stress upon vigilance sustained throughout the discourse suggests that the final call to watchfulness in verse 37 is not focused exclusively upon the last day, but like the previous admonitions, has bearing upon the continuing life of the Church during an age marked by false teachers, persecution and delay in the Lord’s return. (Lane)

**13:32–37** In contrast to the fall of Jerusalem (vv 5–23), which will happen within a generation, no one knows the day when Jesus will return to judge the world (vv 24–27). Jesus exhorts us to vigilance and encourages us to use the available time wisely, proclaiming the Gospel for the salvation of others. Jesus promises to be with us always and has poured out on us His Holy Spirit for the work of evangelizing the nations. • “The world is very evil, The times are waxing late; Be sober and keep vigil, The Judge is at the gate; The Judge that comes in mercy, The Judge that comes with might, To terminate the evil, To diadem the right.” Amen. (*TLH* 605:1) (TLSB)