

How To Wait For Christ's Return

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[0 : 00] Amen. Take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark, the 13th chapter.

Mark 13. Let's listen as God speaks to us. As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Look, teacher, what massive stones, what magnificent buildings.

Do you see all these great buildings, replied Jesus? Not one stone here will be left on another. Every one will be thrown down. As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled? Jesus said to them, Watch out that no one deceives you.

[1 : 16] Many will come in my name, claiming, I am he, and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed.

Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places and famines.

These are the beginning of birth pains. You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to local councils and flogged in the synagogues.

On account of me, you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time.

[2 : 25] For it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and to father his child.

Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me. But he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Amen. The last week of our Lord's life, before his crucifixion, it's here that Mark slows way down in his account, and he spends a third of his book on this last week.

And so on Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem amid the triumphal, joyous reception of welcoming their Messiah King, excited about all the miracles that Jesus has been doing, especially just raising Lazarus from the dead.

And then that same Sunday, he went into the temple to inspect it, and he saw what was going on there. It had become a cattle market, people taking shortcuts, walking through the temple precincts, all distractions from its rightful use of worshiping God.

[3 : 52] On Monday, he went to the temple and drove out those money changers and the sellers of animals and declared, it is written, my house will be a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of robbers, quoting from Jeremiah 7.

That was Monday. On Tuesday, oh my, this was a long day. Tuesday. On Tuesday, Jesus goes back to the temple and he's teaching, and they start asking questions of him.

I say they, his enemies, the scribes and Pharisees and the Sadducees, wave after wave of questions, trying to trick him into saying something that will ruin his reputation with the crowd and get him into trouble with the Roman authorities.

And our Lord astounds them all with his wisdom. And then he ends his words to the crowd, his last words to the crowd, by warning them against their religious leaders who were leading them to hell. He called the attention of his disciples then to true religion, depicted in this poor woman who gave more than all the others because she gave all that she had. And then Jesus left the temple, as far as we know, for the last time.

[5 : 21] And then Mark writes here in chapter 13 and verse 1, as he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, look, teacher, what massive stones, what magnificent buildings.

I want you to notice the two different views of the temple that we have before us here. The first is the disciples' view. They're greatly impressed with the outward splendor of the temple complex of buildings.

And to be sure, it was a marvel to behold. It was one of the architectural wonders of the Roman world. The temple that had been built in this place by Solomon a thousand years earlier had been destroyed by the Babylonians as God's judgment upon the false religion going on in the temple. Well, under Nehemiah and Ezra, the Jews that came back to Jerusalem after it had been destroyed, they rebuilt the temple, but it was much smaller and not as glorious as Solomon's temple.

And then King Herod in 20 BC began to renovate and expand the temple. And this is the temple that Jesus visited when he was 12 years old and sat there with the scribes and the teachers and asked questions and gave answers.

[6 : 43] That's the same temple that on this Tuesday he's been answering their questions as now they're trying to trick him. And Herod had spared nothing of expense in this temple.

It was built out of white marble stones decorated with gold. And it was the size of the stones that was called attention to him.

What massive stones! Josephus, the Jewish historian, records that some of these stones were 40 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 12 feet high.

That's as wide as this building, almost as high as this ceiling, and 18 feet wide. Stones as sturdy as they were beautiful, seemingly unmovable.

Look, teacher! Isn't it magnificent? Well, this view of the temple was correct in as far as it went. They were amazing buildings.

[7 : 51] But Jesus is not at all impressed with mere outward splendor. He sees the abuse of the temple. He sees the lack of true worship of the people, the wickedness of the leaders, their rejection of him who is the true temple, the meeting place of God and man.

And now he gives his view of this temple. It's actually a prophecy that he makes of God's judgment once again visiting the temple.

Do you see all these great buildings, replied Jesus? Not one stone here will be left on another. Every one will be thrown down.

Now that temple was destroyed 40 years later in 70 AD. As God's judgment upon the land.

When the Romans grew tired of all these Jewish rebellions going on, General Titus would come with his army and besiege Jerusalem and starve the people. And then enter and level the city, burning and completely destroying the temple.

[9 : 04] Josephus records over a million Jews died. And all in fulfillment of Jesus' words 40 years earlier on this Tuesday of Passion Week.

It all happened just as Jesus said it would. Eleven years after its destruction, the Arch of Titus was built in Rome in celebration of this victory over the Jews in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, you can still see it today in Rome. And it stands as a witness to the words of our Savior that this would be the case, that Jerusalem and the temple would be completely destroyed.

As he'll say later on in our chapter, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Every last one will be fulfilled. Well, this prophecy of Jesus took the wind out of the sails of his disciples.

They, like the people, were looking forward to their Messiah King coming and smashing the Romans and bringing Israel to headship again where they were the head and all the other nations were the tail.

[10 : 11] And instead, Jesus is prophesying destruction and doom over Jerusalem and their temple, their beloved temple.

Well, it was about a 30-minute walk from the temple. As they're leaving the temple, they would go through the Kidron Valley and then the Mount of Olives. About a half an hour's walk.

So the disciples had a little time to try to sort out this destruction of the temple and to see how that fit into their eschatology, their view of last things. And so now they're on Mount, the Mount of Olives, and they're looking back over the Kidron Valley and there shines the temple as they're having this conversation.

And here we have the disciples' question that prompts Jesus' longest answer in the whole book of Mark's gospel, signaling to us the importance of this passage.

Verses 3 and 4, as Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, tell us when these things will happen and what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled.

[11 : 31] Now Matthew, as we've noted along here, fills in a little bit more fully what they asked. This is what Matthew records. When will this happen, the destruction of the temple?

And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? Do you hear what they're asking? Evidently they thought that something so catastrophic as the destruction of the temple must surely mean that it would happen when Jesus came back at the end of the age.

But we know that their expectation was wrong as some other expectations that they had about Messiah were wrong. For in fact, these are two separate events.

They don't happen together. There is the destruction of the temple that took place in 70 AD. And then there's the coming of Christ at the end of the age that has not yet happened and we're already 2,000 years and counting.

These are not going to happen together as the disciples thought and had asked. And our Lord will address that and correct their confusion in His discourse and will warn them not to prematurely think that the end has come before the distressing events that are happening to them and around them.

[13 : 00] And so His answer to us and to them should be a rebuke to the end times excitement of trying to figure out the timing of Christ's return and the end of the age by interpreting the supposed signs that His coming is about to happen.

I remember going to the church mailbox in 1988 and receiving a little book free sent to me by Edgar Wisenart entitled 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988.

And it created all kinds of hysteria and excitement in the churches of Jesus Christ. He thought he had figured out the signs pointing to the timing of Christ's return.

He sold four and a half million copies. Needless to say, when 1988 passed, it was no longer on the bestseller list.

Let's put it that way. It was one of those books that was probably trashed by most people. And sadly, people come to this chapter and its parallels in Matthew 24 and in Luke 21 and think that if we can just understand Jesus' words here, well, then we can figure out the signs that will let us know the timing of when Jesus will come back.

[14 : 24] Now, that's faulty for several reasons. We'll see them in the future. But first of all, Jesus Himself says in this chapter that even He doesn't know the timing of His return.

No one but the Heavenly Father. So that's clearly not His aim in this passage. Secondly, I intend to show that all the time signs of this chapter are for the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD and that Jesus gives us no time signs for His return at the end of the age.

So, spoiler alert. If you thought that I was going to clear up all your questions about the end times, I'm sad to tell you you're going to be greatly disappointed. But I do trust that we'll all come away with a clear view of what Jesus wants us to know about the end times.

About why Jesus takes such a long time to address this issue. It's of great importance and what is it that He's concerned about.

His purpose here is not to satisfy our curiosity about when He's coming. His purpose is to assure us that He is coming and to be sure we are ready any time for it.

[15 : 45] To help us persevere is His concern. To persevere through all the trouble and distress happening to us and around us while we're waiting for Him to come. He'll have warnings of dangers.

He has 19 imperatives in this discourse. 19 commands. We see just from that that His purpose is not to give us all this information about the signs of the time.

His purpose is to warn us to be ready, to be watchful, to not be deceived, to persevere to the end. A very practical heart on...

a practical concern on our Savior's heart that He has for His disciples. So it's called the Olivet Discourse because it was given on the Mount of Olives and it's considered as one of the most difficult chapters to understand in the Bible.

And no small reason is because it's not always easy to know when He's speaking of the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. and when He's speaking about His return in the end of the age.

[16:49] And in the end you may not be convinced of my understanding of last things but I trust we will all be better off for considering the emphasis of Jesus in this chapter as we think about His coming at the end of the age.

So Jesus is just three days from His cross and then His burial and resurrection and ascension and He's wanting to help His disciples to know how shall you live when I'm not here with you?

By the way that's the way it still is, isn't it? We need to know how to live while He's not yet come back and He's not with us. I say that physically obviously He is with us spiritually but physically returning as He promised.

It's not going to be easy. There's a self to deny there's a cross to carry there's a Christ to follow and we'll need to be willing to lose our life that we may gain what is truly life.

So in verses 5 to 13 then Jesus speaks of some of the features that are present during this whole period until He returns at the end of the age.

[18:05] Features that would present challenges and dangers for believers. So today we're looking and we're hearing Jesus give several warnings to His followers of things that must happen before Jesus returns.

The first is the presence of false teachers and false messiahs and the dangers that will be deceived by them. Notice 5 and 6.

Jesus said to them watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name claiming I am He and will deceive many. The I am ego e me that's the name of God in the Old Testament and Jesus takes it to Himself and He's saying there will come people who will use that of themselves and take the honor of being the Messiah to themselves.

And notice His double use of many. Many will come deceiving claiming divine honor and not a few will be deceived. Many. Now times are going to be desperate as He's going to lay out.

He's going to talk of famine. Have you ever been without food for a week? Well, if you had then you would know that in desperate times you're all the more vulnerable to hearing someone stand up and say I have the answer.

[19:34] I will lead us out of this. And therefore in these distressing times you're going to have false teachers and false messiahs coming and saying I am He.

And that's exactly what happened after Jesus went to heaven. They even had false messiahs before Jesus but a whole line of false messiahs gathered followers to themselves after Jesus ascended.

Josephus records some of them. One Thutis is mentioned in Acts chapter 5 verse 36 and 400 followers followed him. He was killed and his followers were scattered.

Another is mentioned in Acts 21:38 an Egyptian who started a revolt led 4,000 terrorists. And then in 130 AD Bar Kokhba led a rebellion against Rome claiming to be the messiah and had many followers.

In our day we've had David Koresh and Jim Jones and other cult leaders pretending to be Jesus. These are just a few. The list of false messiahs is a long one fulfilling Christ's words.

[20:46] Many deceivers many deceived. Be sure you're not one of them. That's the concern of Jesus. Not trying to figure out when he's coming.

That's the watching you need to do. Not watching for certain signs that mean oh he's coming right away now. No. Watching yourself from deception.

Oh I wouldn't follow such a one you say. he was he's warning his twelve disciples at least four of them who spent three years with him.

Watch out lest you be deceived he says to them. I would say to you be sure you know the true messiah. Be sure you know the Lord Jesus Christ by repentance and faith.

Be sure that you're walking with him. That you're studying him. You're knowing him. You're trusting and obeying him and you'll have no need for another. You will not want another messiah. So that's the first feature that's to be found in this period before Jesus returns.

[21:58] A second feature is the frightening world events. And the danger is that we become so caught up and upset by them wrongly thinking that this is the end of the world.

Verses seven and eight. when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen. There's a divine necessity.

It's all part of history that God has ordained. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nations will rise against nations, kingdoms against kingdom.

There will be earthquakes in various places and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. These are merely, only the beginning of birth pains.

Now, these are the frightening events then that are happening throughout the world and throughout the ages. Indeed, many teachers today are pointing to them as signs that Jesus' coming is sure to happen very soon.

[23 : 07] these natural disasters around the world, the warring nations over in the Middle East. Prophecy teachers tell us there's surely signs that the end is here, but the Lord Jesus tells us exactly otherwise in our text.

He says, don't be alarmed. These are not markers of the end. The end is still to come. These are only the beginning of birth pains.

Now, some of you first-time dads, when your pregnant wife has her first birth pain, it's not time to start the car. That's too early. Maybe you'll want to pack a suitcase and be ready, but the first beginning of birth pains does not mean that the birth is going to happen right away.

Some of you could tell long stories about how long labor can be. Paul said that in his day, Romans 8, 22, we know that the whole creation is groaning in the labor pains, longing to be set free from the curse.

The creation has been groaning in birth pains for thousands of years. Wars, rumors of war, earthquakes, famines, all these have a tendency to alarm and frighten and distract us from our duties, thinking, oh no, this must be the end.

[24 : 37] But these are not markers, sign markers of the timing of Christ's return at the end of the age. These are things that must happen in God's plan for the ages.

And the entire time between the first coming, the resurrection and ascension into heaven and Christ's return is referred to as the last days. And all 2,000 years of these last days have been marked by wars and rumors of war, earthquakes and famines and such storms.

Historians tell us that there's never been an age without wars in all of human history. Did you know there's 38 of them going on at present? There's civil wars, nation against nation, tribe against tribe, kingdom against kingdom.

The same can be said about earthquakes and famines. These things happened right away in the book of Acts. You can read in chapter 11 verse 28, a great famine over the whole world in the days of Claudius.

And then Paul would go around to his Gentile churches where he evangelized and he would take up collections for the suffering Jews in Judea who were suffering from a famine.

[25 : 53] These were common things. The Old Testament's full of them. Famine, famine, famine. And it continues to this day. earthquakes.

The greatest earthquakes have not happened in our lifetime. But you who study history know that there have been massive earthquakes in the past and all of this has been going on throughout this present age.

Yet how many books and TV programs are there about the news behind the news? Trying to interpret these things as signs that Jesus has got to be coming right now.

It's the end of the age. And that's happened in every age. These who would tell us that these are signs marking the time of Christ's return.

Well, anxiety about war is a common factor with men. We watch the news and it's meant to make you afraid and there is scary stuff happening.

[26 : 58] And that's what Jesus is addressing and he knows how prone that they will be to misinterpret these events as signs of the end. So he says, don't be disturbed and alarmed by these contemporary events that stir up fear.

Realize they're all under God's sovereign control. They're all part of his plan for this present evil age. It must happen before the end. So what are these events, these features then?

If they're not signs of the timing of Jesus' return, they're like a shot across the bow of a ship. If you spot an enemy's ship and before you sink it you shoot one missile across the bow, what is it?

It's a warning, isn't it? I can just lower our gauge just a little bit and you'll be shot out of the water. So turn around, surrender.

surrender. And that's what these features that Jesus is mentioning are. They're reminders that the end is coming, but they say nothing about the timing of the end.

[28 : 08] God is holy, he is just, and he will judge those who reject his son. So in that sense, they point to the end, but they say nothing about the timing of it.

Well, the third feature of this age then, not only false messiahs and all these frightening events of the world, but thirdly persecution.

And the danger here is that we would not persevere to the end because we're trying to avoid the persecution.

So verses 9 to 13, you must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me, you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.

And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. And whenever you're arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever's given you at the time, for it's not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

[29 : 08] Brother will betray brother to death. And a father, his child, children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

There are really two more features of this age before Jesus comes back. Things that must happen, but there are no time markers as to the end of the age.

Persecution and evangelism. And you can see why they're mentioned together. They're found together all through the ages where you have the evangelism, the preaching of the gospel.

You have persecution of that gospel. And they will be found together in every age right up to the return of Christ. Whether it was in the first century Palestine, which the apostles experienced, or whether it's 21st century Iran or China.

It's the gospel of Christ that always evokes persecution from the world. It always has. It always will until Christ returns. It's inevitable. Darkness hates the light.

[30 : 24] And those walking in darkness hate someone commanding them to repent of their sins that they lost and to trust in what this Nazarene carpenter's son did in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago on the cross.

To trust in him for their salvation. They don't like that light. And sometimes they strike out against the messenger of that message. This was already experienced in the ministry of Jesus.

So his disciples saw it. They saw that Jesus was, he's preaching and he's being persecuted.

They're going to nail him to a cross. And more than once he's warned the disciples that this is going to happen to them.

Blessed are you, Sermon on the Mount, when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you. You, you, you. Speaking to his disciples who were gathered there.

John 15, 18 and following. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I've chosen you out of the world and that's why the world hates you.

[31 : 39] Remember the words I spoke to you. No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. He's looking at real people in the eyeballs. They will treat you this way because of my name.

Earlier, Jesus had said to the twelve as he sent them out to preach. He prepared them for it with these words in Matthew 10. Do not think I've come to bring peace to the earth.

I did not come to bring peace, but to bring a sword. For I've come to turn a man, and now he's quoting from Micah 7. I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

A man's enemies will be the members of his own household. The gospel evokes persecution, and sometimes of the most unnatural kind.

A son actually killing his father. A father killing his son. We've lived in a bubble here in the West for 250 years.

[32 : 51] But we need to remember that we are following the one the world crucified because he preached the light of the gospel.

And the world's not changed, and the gospel's not changed. And so Jesus is saying this is one of those features of this whole age. You preach the gospel, and you will be persecuted for it.

And Jesus is wanting to prepare them for it. He's soon to be in heaven, and they're going to taste it firsthand.

And it began at once as the book of Acts reveals. Stephen Stone, James the apostle was beheaded. All 11 apostles, but John, were martyred for the faith, as church history says. John himself was exiled on the island, that barren island of Patmos. For the gospel's sake, Paul, he begins persecuting Christians. That's what Jesus said would happen when people believe on Jesus and follow him and proclaim his gospel.

[33 : 56] And he goes from persecuting Christians to then becoming a Christian and being persecuted for proclaiming the gospel. Five times I received the 39 lashes, or the 40 lashes minus one.

Three times beaten with rods. I was stoned and left for death. Oh yes, this is what Jesus is saying to his disciples.

This is going to happen. This is all part of the age. They're not signs of my coming. They're things that have to happen. But don't make them markers that, oh, that means that then my coming must just be around the corner.

Folks, this is 2,000 years ago that Paul and the apostles were persecuted in fulfilling these words. He still hasn't come. First 300 years were killing times for the church such that the phrase, the proverb came that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

They preached and they killed them and the church grew and thrived. They killed them again. It's continued for 2,000 years. Now, we're sheltered from it.

[35 : 13] Read Fox's book of martyrs. It's been going on all through the age. Read church history. Read Voice of the Martyrs, present magazine, presently around the world.

Persecution is not a sign marking the timing of Christ's return. It will go on happening to the very end. It must happen. And it's followed the gospel proclamation for nearly 2,000 years and will to the end.

So here's some applications then from Jesus' sermon this morning thus far. The first is you who don't know this Messiah, Jesus. If you refuse him, if you reject him like Israel did, you need to appreciate the shot across the bow in Jesus' words.

He's saying this is what happens to those who reject Christ's Messiah. And we'll see more of it next time when we see the fulfillment of that prophecy of the temple and Jerusalem being destroyed. But it's a reminder of the end. Jesus is coming and he's coming back to judge all men. Word to you, get into Christ now.

[36 : 38] The only safe place to be, the only place to find refuge from the coming wrath. Jesus who saves us from the coming wrath. That's the message throughout this chapter to those who are not in Christ.

But then there's many messages to those who are followers of Christ. Let's learn from Jesus' words here. First of all, to not misinterpret persecution, wars, worldwide disasters as marks of the end. It is not the end. The end is yet to come. These are just the beginnings of birth pangs that can last who knows how long. Secondly, don't worry beforehand about what you'll say when you're arrested. Because just say whatever's given you at that time and it's not going to be you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. And that's the way it was. Peter and John, they're preaching and they're arrested and thrown into prison.

And the next day they're called and drug in before the Sanhedrin, the high court. And they're charging them with insurrection, stirring up a crowd, saying that we're guilty of the blood of Jesus.

[37 : 52] When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and took note of them that they had been with Jesus.

Oh, yes. Of course. Because the Spirit of Jesus, His Holy Spirit, dwells in them. Has come to dwell in every believer at the moment of conversion for the rest of their life that they might bear witness to Christ.

And yes, if you're drug into a court scene, being charged for being a follower of Jesus, you have this promise that the Holy Spirit will help you in that moment to know what to say.

Now, that's not a blanket statement about everything. I know some preachers who don't prepare their messages because it'll be given me when I get up in the pulpit.

I've heard prepared sermons and I've heard unprepared sermons. I prefer the prepared ones. This is not a verse for that. This is for when you're persecuted and drug into court.

[39 : 00] Oh, what did I say? Don't be worried. The Spirit will help you. He's been given for that. And then, third lesson, don't let any of these things distract you from your mission.

The gospel must be preached to all nations. And it's through our evangelizing of the world that Jesus is calling out a bride for himself.

What a privilege is ours. The book of Revelation shows that the whole period between Christ's first coming and second coming is a period of evangelism.

This is the age of missions. When Jesus left us, he said, go and make disciples of the nations. This is the mandate. This is the calling of the church.

Let me ask you, Christian, how focused is your life on the mission? Are you bearing witness to Christ? If you cannot go and tell the heathen across the sea, you can find the heathen nearer at your door.

[40 : 03] And if you're not able to go, are you willing to be intensely involved in giving and praying that for those who do go, that the gospel might continue to all the nations?

This nation as well. The book of Revelation shows that this whole period then is one of evangelism and persecution. You see it right through the whole of Revelation.

Evangelism, persecution. Evangelism, persecution. And the Revelation says repeatedly, this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

What does? Being persecuted for righteousness sake, for proclaiming the gospel. It calls for patient perseverance, endurance.

Endurance to the end because only those who endure to the end will be saved. Don't let the persecution cause you to be unfaithful to Christ.

[41 : 08] That's what Jesus says is going to happen. People who try to avoid persecution will fall away.

So it's not all who make a beginning and make a profession are baptized that will be saved when Jesus comes back.

But it's all those who persevere to the end. It's not the flash in the pan jumping on the Christian bandwagon. Hail Messiah on Sunday.

Crucify him on Friday. No, it's those who continue all the way to the end that will be saved when Jesus returns. And you see, they persevere to the end because God is preserving them to the end. Those he saves, he keeps. He will lose none of all that have come to him in faith, but will raise them up at the last day. And you're persevering to the end simply shows that, yes, God has done a work in you.

[42 : 24] This is not just some little decision you came up with. You won't persevere if that's all you've got. But if God comes and gives you a new heart, if God comes and works faith and repentance in your life, it will go on forever because what he starts, he continues until the age of Jesus, the day of Jesus Christ when he returns.

So this chapter is very important. It's the longest discourse of Jesus in Mark's gospel. Can you see something then of Jesus' emphasis in the chapter just as we've begun?

It's not on trying to figure out the times. Not of Jesus' return at the end of the age. It's rather how to live until the end of the age.

How to live with false teachers and false messiahs. How to live with war and rumors of war and storms and tempests and everything in turmoil.

He doesn't say, take heed to the signs. He says, take heed to yourself. Do you know you're your greatest enemy? It's because of you and your weakness that you might turn your back on Christ if it's going to cost that much.

[43 : 44] So beware. Watch. Pray. Persevere to the end. So leave off the end time hysteria that marked the last 2,000 years of trying to interpret signs of when he's coming.

Rather be convinced that he is coming. And get into Christ if you're not into Christ by faith and repentance. And then live for him. Walk with him.

Stay close to him. Because troubling times are happening in every age until he comes. Keep denying yourself. Keep taking up your cross and following him.

Keep trusting and obeying his word. Keep guarding your heart. Heeding its warnings. Bearing witness to Christ and word and deed.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. So let that day of Christ return. Whenever that is. Affect how you live every day. That's the message. You see. It's very practical.

