

3. Meet Jesus: As He explains how to live in the last days

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[0 : 00] You'll find a Bible somewhere and we're in chapter 13 of Mark's Gospel. We're right at the end of chapter 13. It's on page 850.

And we'll read from verse 32. There's a sermon here for Bob Fyle and Edward Lobb in verse 32. No one knows the time, not even the angels in heaven nor the sun, but only the Father. You might, if you want to look into that verse 32 a little bit more, it's to do with Jesus' incarnation.

And you'll see Paul will throw some light on it from Philippians chapter 2 and verses 5 to 8, if you wanted to look at that at home.

So I'll read from verse 32. But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the sun, but only the Father.

[1 : 09] Be on guard. Keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 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.

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 cock crows or in the morning. Lest he comes suddenly and find you asleep.

And what I say to you, I say to all, stay awake. We looked at chapter 13 of Mark's Gospel earlier on in March.

And if your memory is anything like mine, you'll value a recap. My memory is quite appalling. I wasn't sure whether to just tell you how bad my memory is, but why not?

I was taking some clothing to the Heart Foundation shop in Johnston. And we'll park right outside because they've got quite a lot of clothing.

[2 : 22] You know how you sometimes have a clear out of things. And Catherine waited in the car. And I dropped all this clothing off. And whilst I was in the shop, I was looking around at things.

And I saw a lovely Burberry coat. It's a very nice coat. Something like Edward Lobb wears. And I thought, oh, that's really nice. And then I went back into the car.

And I said, Catherine, I've seen a lovely long black coat. And she said, don't you remember? I said, what do you mean? She said, it's your coat.

And it was. That's how bad my memory is. So, let's have a look. Where are we in Mark's Gospel so far? Well, chapter 1, verse 15.

Jesus is broken onto the scene, hasn't he? He says, listen to this. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel.

[3 : 22] And so Jesus is drawing the church to himself. But old Israel, old Israel, the religious institution as it had become, well, they don't like Jesus rocking the boat.

Old Israel, they want, from chapter 3, verse 6, this is shocking, they want Jesus dead. And there's this conflict all the way through Mark's Gospel.

As Jesus is drawing new Israel, the church, to himself. Old Israel, they're just glaring at what Jesus is doing. You know, it's all happening under their noses, but they're kicking up a fight.

They don't like it. Now, think about this. The identity of old Israel was encapsulated where?

In the temple, wasn't it? The temple became the visual aid for the perceived importance of old Israel as a nation.

[4 : 24] But the temple system, well, it had become a man-made institution. Jesus says, you've made it into a den of robbers.

Chapter 11, as he confronted them all in the temple. Chapter 11, well, it's a scene. It's like a tornadoes ripping through the place. Trading tables overturned, coins strewn everywhere. You know, this wasn't old wineskins having new wine put in, was it? This is a totally new order. And Jeremiah shouts from deep in the Old Testament.

He shouts, Amen. Listen to this. Jeremiah is writing 600 BC here. Listen to this. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Not like the one that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand, bringing them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.

[5 : 30] But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, declares the Lord, I will put my law within them. I will write it on their hearts. Isn't this lovely?

And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Isn't that lovely? And so the old order is passing away. Chapter 1, verse 15.

Jesus says, doesn't he, the time is fulfilled. But the religious leaders, well, they still think they're in control. Chapter 14, and they arrange for Jesus to be arrested.

This is shocking. Listen to this. God's people arrest God's son. It's unbelievable. It's absolutely shocking. Chapter 14, and verse 43.

We've got the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders arresting Jesus. It's a trinity of death. And chapter 15, he's crucified.

[6 : 31] But as he dies, friends, the curtain in the temple is torn. Isn't it? In two. And it's the end of the temple system.

And our chapter 13 is preparing the disciples for the bulldozers moving in. And we'll see that in verses 1 and 2.

Just have a look with me, verses 1 and 2. The disciples are thinking religiously in verse 1, a little like us from time to time. And then just look at the contrast in verse 2.

So verse 1, chapter 13. And as Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Look, teacher, what wonderful stones, what wonderful buildings, as indeed they were.

Now look at this, juxtaposed. This takes the wind out of the sails. Jesus says, verse 2. Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

[7 : 32] But listen, chapter 13 is not only about the end of the temple system. It's also about the end of our world. And so chapter 13, it's suddenly very relevant, isn't it friends?

To you and to me. What's happening in chapter 13 is that Jesus is bringing the future from the future into the present.

It should sort of come cascading into our thinking as we look at this passage. So that it hits us and changes our lives.

So in chapter 13, there's two installments of judgment. Number one, old Israel and the temple. Number two, the whole world and its idols.

Let's look at chapter 13, verses 3 and 4. And you'll notice one question that the disciples ask.

[8 : 39] And it like sets up the whole chapter. It's like lighting the blue touch paper. Here we go.

You'll notice the one question. And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, here's the question.

Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? So here we go. This isn't a 25 pound palm reading from the clairvoyant in the Savoy Centre on Socky Hall Street.

No, this is revelation, friends, from the Alpha and the Omega. The Lord of Time. The Lord of the whole of the cosmos.

When we go to the cinema, there's quite often a trailer, isn't there? You've been to the cinema and there's a trailer for a film coming up.

You know, the lights darken. And we're sort of transported, aren't we, from our seats to some new environment with all the special effects. Spectacular scenes come flying in at us, don't they, off the screen.

[9 : 53] I saw the space shuttle taking off at the IMAX cinema in Glasgow. And I wore those 3D glasses. You know those 3D glasses? It was awesome as it took off.

It felt like the seats were shaking. Chapter 13 is a spectacular preview of the future. The disciples' eyes, they must have been popping out like organ stops.

As the future, it came pouring into the present. Listen to this. There's wars, there's famines, there's arrest warrants, there's court appearances, there's earthquakes, God's Spirit speaking through the disciples, there's betrayal.

Verse 14, there's coded communication. Verse 21, there's propaganda. There's cosmic disruption. The sun withdrawing its light.

The stars falling from heaven. And verses 26 and 27. Here it is, friends. This is where it's all heading.

[10:55] Look with me. Verses 26 and 27. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

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. The disciples look into his eyes.

It's him. No mistake about it. And it all seems so topsy-turvy. He's the carpenter's son, isn't he?

Sitting in the dust on the Mount of Olives. No form or majesty. Despised and rejected by men.

And it's like that, friends. When we open our Bibles, it doesn't look much, does it? You know, your friends at work might not understand.

[11:59] But when we open God's Word, we get connected with the Creator of the cosmos. Look there at verse 31. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

So chapter 13. Jesus is giving us the big picture. So that we're in the know. We've got inside information. I remember my life before I was a Christian.

In my motorcycle shop in Derbyshire. And I've got no idea, really, what the future held. And our world, it hasn't a clue, has it?

Am I right? It doesn't know. Or rather, well, it does have a clue. Romans chapter 1. But it suppresses that. It rejects it.

The world, well, it's a little bit like a bunch of poor laboratory rats. They're trying to get out of a maze.

[13:05] And this little rat, it comes up to a T-junction in the maze. Will it go right or will it go left? And we're all shouting, Turn left! Turn left! But the rat's not got the big picture, has it?

It's not got an aerial view, like we have. So it turns right. Doesn't it, friends? And that's the world in which we live. It's not got the big picture.

So that, listen, it can't live accordingly. But God gives to us, doesn't he? His revelation. And we can live consistent lives.

So here's a question. Will you live the world's way? Or will you live God's way? And Moses shouts from deep inside the Bible, choose life.

Choose life, friends, this very day. So our passage, verses 32 to 37, there's two types of servant. Do you remember in this passage?

[14:07] One's complacent, the other's faithful. Let's think about the complacent servant first. Let's think about him. Now remember, Jesus is explaining how the disciples should live in these last days.

Verse 34, It's 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.

Think about this. It's a little bit like leaving Adam in charge, isn't it? In the garden. Verses 35 to 37. Just picture this, as if God is giving Adam these instructions. 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 cock crows, or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

And what I say to you, I say to all, stay awake. And God returns. And he says to Adam, where are you?

[15:14] And Adam's hiding, isn't he? He's hiding. He'd hoped God would stay away. But God returned unexpectedly. The master returned.

And the complacent servants looking for cover on judgment day. Think about this. If he'd known the exact date when the master would be returning, he'd have done some repenting, wouldn't he? Beforehand. But he's caught out. And we slip into sin. You and me. Don't we? It's the delay that beguiles us.

You know, think about it. We think we can get away with things, don't we? And in our thinking, we say to ourselves, well, he didn't return just then to judge me. I didn't get caught red-handed. And like a serial offender, we can seem to get away with it. And we can become complacent. One thing leads to another. David glimpsed Bathsheba.

[16:19] Her husband, Uriah the Hittite, was away, wasn't he? Fighting a war. Uriah, will he be a long time coming, wouldn't he? And one thing led to another.

Think about it. How would we live? Here's a question. How would we live if we knew the exact date when Jesus would return? Let's say we knew it would be in 3,000 years or something like that. Well, it's not in my lifetime, we'd all think, wouldn't we? Am I right? Although we could die suddenly. But the general feeling would be, well, you know, at least he's not going to catch me out. And what would we do? We tend to manipulate the system. Feel we've got some sort of measure of control and soon it's laissez-faire, isn't it? The last verse of Judges, each did what was right in his own eyes.

And if you're a Christian friend, you can slip back into your old ways. You can decide that it's you in charge in this area or that area of your life.

[17:28] And you begin to ignore things that should be repented of. Thinking that you've got more time. Or else you just don't bother telling your friends and family about Jesus.

You think you've got endless opportunities to do that. What if you're not a Christian yet? If you're not yet a Christian, you're probably procrastinating.

Putting off your dealings with God for a more convenient time. The Master's a long time returning and it's like you've nodded off in your cabin of the Titanic.

and you're woken by the sound of furniture crashing, people screaming, the cabin seems to be tipping up, you slide down towards the wall, the lights are flickering and suddenly everything goes black.

The sun will withdraw its light. the stars will fall from the heavens, says Jesus. The Master's a long time coming and he's a report about relationships from the Church of Scotland.

[18:43] the widespread belief in the early Church that the Second Coming was imminent has been replaced, has it? By a different expectation after almost 2,000 years of history.

In that time the Church has adapted its understanding of matters which are not at the core of the faith to the insights of developing human knowledge and social change.

The Master's a long time coming and each did what was right in his own sight. And others are like the ones sown among thorns.

They are those who hear the word but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires of other things enter in and choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

The Master's a long time coming and it's old Israel. they'd virtually given up on the Messiah coming. Waited 400 years since the close of the Old Testament and if he did come well they expected Chinook helicopters, troops and a confrontation with Rome, a battle but they'd fallen asleep on watch.

[20:03] didn't notice a wee baby born outside of an inn in the town of David didn't obey a carpenter's son with no form or majesty.

the master of the house it's him isn't it on the Mount of Olives with the disciples he looks at the temple and the carpenter's son says not one stone will be left upon another meekness and majesty oh what a mystery and from the temple Jesus turns to the church the church of 2010 and it's you and me he's looking at friends Jesus says to you and me this day he says the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at end repent and believe the gospel and so friends today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart and so that was the complacent servant let's look at the faithful servant about two minutes

I think we'll do that with two minutes the faithful servant the faithful servant's alert what a contrast he is he's not being mesmerised by all this world pumps out at him he's like the apostle John who says come Lord Jesus come he's got a clear conscience he keeps short accounts he's busy with his master's work he prays your will be done and Jesus friends Jesus friends he wants each of us to be like that to be faithful in these last days just listen to the repetition of these verses before us here look at this verse 33 keep awake verse 34 stay awake verse 35 stay awake the last two words of verse 37 stay awake they're like electric shocks to our heart aren't they Jesus snatching us back from the intoxicating ways of this world

Simeon was waiting for the Messiah he looked at baby Jesus and he says my eyes have seen your salvation so here it is it's how to meet Jesus this is what faith looks like it's how to live our short allotted days on planet earth shall we pray dear heavenly father as we look forward to the return of your son we ask that you would enable us through your spirit to align our lives to his your will be done and to this end may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us this day and forever more Amen