

## Ojo! Jesus is Coming

Jesus concludes His Olivet Discourse by teaching on His second coming. He is burdened to communicate what is both certain and uncertain about His coming and what is not certain. His fundamental purpose is practical. He wants us to know how to live in light of His coming again. “Ojo” is the Spanish word for eye. Used as an expression, it means to “Watch out!” Indeed, watch out for Jesus is coming again.

### Mark 13:24-37

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup> and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. <sup>26</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> “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. <sup>29</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>32</sup> “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup> It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants<sup>2</sup> in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. <sup>35</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> or in the morning—<sup>36</sup> lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

### 1. The second coming of Jesus Christ is certain (Mark 13:24-31).

- A. There are two signs of His second coming. Jesus taught previously that “false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders,” to attempt to lead astray God’s people. The signs that accompany the return of God’s true Messiah will result in the Lord gathering His chosen people and bringing them home. There are two signs:
  1. “The powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Mark 13:24-25) These verses speak of unnatural, cosmic disasters that defy human explanation. Important corollary passages here are Isaiah 13:10, Joel 2:10,31, 2 Peter 3:10-13 (especially verse 10) and Revelation 6:12. Some Scripture scholars question whether these events are to be taken literally or symbolically since Jesus is speaking here in the language of the OT prophets. However, in light of 2 Peter 3:10, His words must have at some level a literal, physical fulfillment.
  2. The Son of Man will come in clouds with great power and glory. (See Matthew 24:30 as an important corollary verse).
- B. How terrifying to think about a shaking heavens and earth. However, Jesus informs us what His first order of business is when He comes again. Verse 27 declares that He will gather His people to Himself from every corner of the earth. This prospect offers tremendous comfort and encouragement to all who trust and love our Lord Jesus. On this day, Palm Sunday, we marvel that Jesus came the first time in weakness and grace so that we would not fear when He comes again in power and glory.
- C. When you see these things taking place, what are you to do? Remember the parable of the fig tree (v.28). The signs that Jesus forecast culminate in His coming. You need no training in horticulture to know that the leafy, tender branches of the fig tree forecast the coming of summer. So, when you see these signs taking place, know that His coming is at hand.
- D. What difference should the certainty of Christ’s coming make in our lives right now? *The certainty of His coming serves as an antidote to the poison of despair, especially when you experience suffering, hardship, and abuse.*

2. **The time of the second coming of Jesus Christ is uncertain (Mark 13:31-33).**
- A. No one knows the timing of our Lord's return (vv.31-33). Neither the angels in heaven nor even the Son know the time of His coming again. Only the Father knows the time when Jesus will return to make all things new. This was something that even Jesus left without questioning in the hands of His Father.
  - B. Yet the littered landscape of church history screams that many have discarded Jesus' own words and have sought in futility to predict the timing of His return.
  - C. We should not be seduced by any well-intentioned person attempting to predict the date of Jesus' second coming. "Surely it is nothing less than blasphemy for us to inquire into that of which our Lord consented to be ignorant" (William Barclay, p. 321).
  - D. C.S. Lewis distills the biblical teaching of our Lord on this subject in his book, *The World's Last Night*: "We must put away from ourselves, utterly and forever, any hope of dating Jesus' return. His teaching on the subject clearly consists of three propositions. (1) He will certainly return. (2) We cannot possibly know when. (3) Therefore we must always be ready for His coming."
3. **We are to stay awake and always be prepared for Jesus' second coming (Mark 13:34-37).**
- A. Three times the word "stay awake" or "watch" is used. In essence, it means to be spiritually alert and watchful. This verb in the original is from the proper name Gregory (the watchful or vigilant one). It is used three times in verses 34, 35, and 37. To stay awake spiritually practically involves three things: watching, praying, and working.
  - B. Watching involves spiritual alertness and cultivating an attitude of expectancy. J.C. Ryle encourages us "to keep our hearts in a wakeful, lively state, prepared at any time to meet our Master. We are to beware of anything like spiritual lethargy or spiritual drifting. "Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6).
  - C. Watching involves prayer. A variant reading of Mark 13:33 says: "Be on your guard, keep alert and pray. Dr. Luke's version of Jesus' Olivet Discourse highlights this aspect of staying awake (Luke 21:34-36).
  - D. Lastly, watching involves working (vv.34-37). It involves diligent service. Watching takes the shape of working as a servant in the master's house. We are like servants who know that their master is coming again, but we don't know when. Thus, we are to remain constantly alert for His imminent return.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are your initial thoughts when you hear that He shall "come again to judge the living and the dead?" Why do you think that the return of Christ is a topic that Christians in the West don't talk about very much right now at this point in our history? J.I. Packer proposes that there has been an eclipse of interest in the subject of the second coming of Jesus for four reasons:
  - We live in a time of reaction from 150 years of "intense prophetic study expressing a spirit of prayerless pessimism about the church and doom-watching detachment from the world."
  - We live in a time of skepticism in which even church folk are questioning such fundamental beliefs as the physical resurrection of Jesus as well as His personal return in glory.
  - We live in a time of timidity in which the church in the West is afraid of being labeled fanatical. Also, the church doesn't want to be branded or accused of not caring about social and economic justice, and some believe that teachings like the second coming of Jesus can promote such a focus on heaven that we become out of touch on earth.
  - Lastly, we live in a time of materialism in the prosperous West. "We think less and less about the better things that Christ will bring us because our thoughts are increasingly absorbed by the good things we enjoy now." (From J.I. Packer, *I Want to be a Christian*, pp. 77-78).

2. What do you think we should learn from our brothers and sisters in the first century who were thrilled and enthralled by the blessed hope of our Lord's second coming? There are more than 300 references to the second coming in the NT, on average one in every 13 verses.
3. What will the Son of Man do when He comes again in power and glory? Read verse 27. How should knowing this encourage and keep us from fearing the future?
4. Read verses 24–27 and Daniel 7:13–14. Jesus' description of a historical shaking leads to a picture of the final cosmic shaking, in which "the Son of Man" is central. Why do you think Jesus uses this title to refer to Himself? In light of Daniel's prophecy, what does this title indicate? The title of "the Son of Man" landed Jesus in incredibly hot water with the religious leaders of His day. See Mark 14:61-62.
5. What difference should the certainty of Jesus' second coming make in your life right now? The sermon mentioned that it serves as an antidote to despair when we walk through times of difficulty, hardship, and suffering. Ask the Lord to reveal to you one way that this teaching should impact your life. To help you think through this, here's a thought-provoking quote from the prince of preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon:  
"It is a very blessed thing to be on the watch for Jesus' return. It blesses us immensely in the present. How it detaches you from the world! You can be poor without murmuring. You can be rich without worldliness. You can be sick without sorrowing. You can be healthy without presumption. If you are expectantly waiting for Christ's second coming, untold blessings are wrapped up in that glorious hope."
6. G. Campbell Morgan describes watching as "the sleepless vigil of the God-desiring soul." Take some time before the Lord to ask Him to examine your heart. Here's a good question for starters: Is there anything or anyone in my life whom I desire more than Jesus and His love? Can I honestly say with the psalmist that "on earth I desire nothing but You?" Is there anything or anyone that is dampening my love and devotion to my Lord? Read Matthew 24:12 and pray that the Lord would show you how to make Jesus Christ the primary affection of your heart.
7. Look ahead in the gospel story in Mark and see what the disciples are doing in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:38-41)? What do you think the Lord wants to teach you from their example? What are ways that you are tempted to lose heart and become weighed down with the cares of this life? How would you pray differently if you viewed prayer as a way to unburden your heart in the presence of the Lord?

8. Many people think that believing in Jesus' second coming tends to promote passivity in making a difference for Christ in this world. Jesus says that watching for His return involves faithfully serving the Master of the House (Mark 13:34).
- What do you think faithful service to Jesus means for you personally in light of your unique calling, tasks, and responsibilities?
  - Why do you think this particular point was poignant for Mark? Remember Mark failed in his initial attempts to serve the Lord and abandoned Paul during the first missionary journey. However, his failures weren't the final word (2 Timothy 4:11). How should this encourage us?
9. The most important question for all of us is this: How can we stand confidently on that day when the Son of Man comes again? Read Revelation 16:15; 7:14. Jesus states that one of the ways that we remain watchful is to have our garments on.
- What do you think it means to have your garments on and not go about naked and exposed?
  - Have you exchanged the filthy rags of your own righteousness (ways that you attempt to gain God's favor) for the beautiful robe of Christ's righteousness? Has Jesus washed your sins away with His blood? Are you looking to and resting in Jesus Christ (His sacrificial death and perfect life) alone for your rescue? If so, you need not fear this day, but rejoice and long for it to come.
  - Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf summarized Jesus' words well in his beloved hymn: "Jesus Thy Blood and Righteousness. Why not take a moment and pray through these two stanzas?

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness, My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, With joy shall I lift up my head.  
Bold shall I stand in Thy great day; For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
Fully absolved through these I am, From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*

### Going Deeper

1. Why not investigate the various ways that Bible scholars have interpreted Mark 13:30? How can we best understand this challenging verse?
- Some view this as proof that Jesus' own view about the end times was badly mistaken. In fact, since His contemporaries (this generation) passed away before "all these things" took place, Jesus was flat out wrong. This erodes His claim to deity and it erodes our confidence in the truthfulness of the Bible. On the other hand...
  - We can believe that the phrase "all these things" does include both the events in vv. 14-23 that occurred between 66-70 AD in the fall of Jerusalem as well as His promised second coming. Thus, "this generation" is not a time reference that points to Jesus' contemporaries, but a reference to a category of folks who are adverse to His teaching and oppose His kingdom. For an example, see Mark 8:38.
2. Others claim that Mark 13:32 chronicles Jesus' ignorance of the actual timing of His second coming and proves that He is not God. How would you answer those who challenge the deity of Jesus Christ from this verse?