

2026-08-16

Watch

Mark 13:28-37

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree.” Has anyone here grown a fig tree? Do you know anything about fig trees? If you know Judy Schrey, she had a fig tree in her backyard at one time, but she got rid of it for a lemon tree. People have grown fig trees for a very long time. There are hundreds of varieties of fig trees. They are a very unique plant. The bloom is on the inside with the fruit. Along with olive trees, fig trees were and still are very popular in Israel. Because the people in Israel grew up with fig trees around them, they knew about fig trees. Like any plant, their growing cycle depends on the seasons and the environment they are in. The timetable of growing plants outdoors is different in Arizona than Alaska as well as in Israel. We can tell the seasons and the change of seasons by the plants and how they are growing and when they are producing fruit in the environment they are in.

Yes, cultures had calendars and some way to tell the general time of day. But they did not have clocks and the accuracy that we place on time today. It is my understanding that the Jewish calendar had twelve months most years. Those twelve months each had 30 days. That is only 360 days. Over time, the seasons would get off track. So, every six years they added a 13th month for an additional 30 days. Not the best way to keep track of time for us, but it worked for them. The better way to tell the changing seasons was not by a date on the calendar but by watching the plants. Do you remember the days when the start of our monsoon season was determined by having three days in a row of humidity at 55% or greater? For some reason our culture had to make it simpler to determine the start of the monsoon season. Now it starts with a date on the calendar.

Jesus was talking to people who knew fig trees. People determined seasons by the fig trees and other plants in Israel. Jesus said, *“When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.”* The Jews could tell when summer was approaching because the leaves had grown a certain size before summer. As Jesus relates this to the coming tribulation of their day, Jesus said, *“So **you** also, when **you** see **these things** happening, know that **it is near**—at the doors!”* (13:28). Jesus is talking to His disciples. What were the “*these things*” Jesus referred to? We only have three options in this chapter. Our first option is the deceptions, wars, natural disasters and persecutions Jesus talked about first (13:5-13). Our second option is the “*abomination of desolation*.” Our third option is the return of Jesus coming in the clouds. Well, unless we have missed something, the third option is out. It has not happened yet and those disciples are long gone. The first option is

also out because Jesus said of those things “*do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet*” (13:7) and He called them “*the beginnings of sorrows*” or birth pangs (13:8). Those four things are part of every coming destruction.

Our best option and only option left is the “*abomination of desolation*” (13:14). With this coming “*abomination of desolation*” Jesus told His people to flee Judah and go to the mountains. The **Christians** did flee Judah in A.D. 66 and 67 as they saw the increasing conflict between Rome and Israel. The **Jews** did not listen to Jesus. They fled into the city of Jerusalem thinking the walls would protect them. When the Romans surrounded the city in A.D. 70, over the next few months those walls contributed to their destruction as the Romans starved the Jews. Eventually, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by the Romans and 1.1 million Jews died. So, “*when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the door.*” So, when the Christians saw the rising conflict with the Romans, they were to know that the destruction of Jerusalem was near. “*It is near.*” The Romans were near, right at the doors of the city. Then Jesus said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*” (13:30). That generation lived and many died in the destruction of their city and temple, just as Jesus said. Then Jesus made a great statement, trying to convince people to believe Him.

Verse 31 “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*” What an amazing declaration! As Christians we believe Jesus speaks the truth. His words, His truths, His promises are eternal. When Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one*” (John 10:27-30). These words will never pass away. They will never change. They are true. When Jesus said, “*I am with you always,*” (Matthew 28:20). His word is true. Even in the midst of our tragedies, doubts and uncertainties, Jesus is always with us. He promised, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*” (Hebrews 13:5). His words will by no means pass away! We know that heaven and earth will pass away. Jesus said so! The apostle John believed Jesus and wrote about this. “*The world is passing away*” along with all the sin. “*But he who does the will of God abides forever*” (1 John 2:17). He also wrote, “*I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away*” (Revelation 21:1). This earth will pass away but the words of God will remain forever. And “*he who does the will of God abides forever.*”

Since Jesus talked about the earth passing away, He returns to the topic of His return. Sometimes when I listen to some people they will talk about several different things.

Those things are not meant to be taken in chronological order. If I did that I would get confused. This is true with these statements of Jesus in this chapter. Jesus talked about something that would happen during the lives of the apostles. He also talked about a future event, His return to earth. Jesus is now talking about His return. When will **they** see *“the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory”*? Jesus said, *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”* (13:32). I am glad we do not know when Jesus is going to return. If everyone knew, my guess is that many non-Christians would think that they could make a “last minute” confess in Jesus Christ and be saved. That would be foolish. We are *“not to receive the grace of God in vain”* (2 Corinthians 6:1). Today is the day of salvation. Now is the acceptable time to believe. God wants people to understand the **joy of faithfully** following our loving God. God wants us to learn the importance of **our obedience** to Christ and His teachings. God wants us to experience the benefits of **loving others** as Jesus loved us. In the minds of non-Christians, their sinful lifestyle is their happiness. They do not see that their sinful lifestyle is their destruction. I would hope that we Christians, even if we knew when Jesus would return, we would remain faithful to God, obedient to His commands and loving others as Jesus loved us.

God is keeping the return of Jesus private. He does not want the angels to be tempted to say something they should not. There will be no anonymous source that gives out the date. While Jesus was on this planet, He did not know the day. Now that He is in heaven with the Father, surely, He knows the day. He can be trusted. He is waiting until everyone has an opportunity to hear the gospel and respond. God is enduring lots of suffering watching all the evil that is going on in this world. Could He put an end to it all immediately? Yes, He could by bringing an end to all humanity and our choice to sin. Instead, He suffers long towards us, *“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). Right after this statement, Peter said, *“but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night”* (2 Peter 3:10). Jesus described it this way.

Verses 33-34 *“Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.”* Who is this man going to a far country? It is best to understand this as Jesus talking about Himself. Where did He go? He went to heaven. That is a far country. He left His house, that is His church and He gave His servants authority. We, His followers are His servants. He gave us His spirit. To each of us He has given His work to do. One of the jobs of the servants was a doorkeeper. On the temple mount the gates were shut every night. A doorkeeper was like a security guard throughout the night. They

watched for the priest. The priest could arrive at anytime to prepare for the day's events. The doorkeeper kept watch and opened the gates whenever the priest arrived.

Verses 35-37 *“Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”* Do you know the Greek word for “Watch”? It is the name “**Gregory**.” It means be alert, be watchful, be vigilant. While we are on the job as followers of Jesus Christ we are to be alert. We are to watch. What are we to watch for? The main thing is to watch for the coming of Jesus. He can arrive at any time. In the scripture verse above all the times are when the gate to the temple mount is closed, from evening to sunrise. During the day the gate was open. What the doorkeeper watched for then was anything or anyone who was not appropriate to enter. Peter used this same word, Gregory, Watch, when he wrote about our adversary. *“Be sober, be vigilant (be watchful); because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith”* (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Are you watching for the return of Jesus? Are you expecting the His return? Some people like to know when I am coming to visit them. That way they can get their house ready. Watching for Jesus, expecting His return is not sitting around gazing up at the sky, waiting, accomplishing nothing. Each servant of the Lord is given at least one task to do until He returns. While we watch and anticipate the arrival of Jesus we are to be about our task. Continue to do His will. Continue being conformed into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Also be aware of your adversary. The devil and his demons are all over, walking around looking for everyone they can lead astray. How can we resist this evil? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Cast all your anxieties and worries on Him. He cares for you. Be controlled by the Spirit of God. Let Him guide you into all truth (John 16:13 / 1 Peter 5:6-7).

Questions to ask yourself: Does believing that Jesus will come in your lifetime change how you live day to day? How should it change you?

Actions to take: Incorporate in your daily life a belief that Jesus could come today. Notice the noise of the devil around you. Put more effort into resisting him.

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Teach believers to worship God; Foster growth in the Christian faith