

8. Mark's 'Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ'

8.10 Jesus taught the coming of the Son of Man (Mark 13:1-37)

Verse 31 speaks of the permanence of Jesus Christ compared with the passing nature of this world. He is the constant foundation in all change; a reliable friend who knows the future of a world that longs to know it. Jesus spoke freely about the end of the world. He said certain things must happen before the climax, and in verse 26, says: 'Men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.' He did not tell us everything about the future, but everything we need to know. Some things he foretold have already been fulfilled and there are others awaiting fulfilment. In all of this there is one closely guarded secret: 'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come' (Mark 13:32-33).

He foretold some things that have already been fulfilled

The building of Herod's temple had begun about fifty years before this time, and was not quite finished when Jesus spoke. It was destroyed in AD 70 (13:2). The desolation of the city of Jerusalem (vv.14-20) was swift to follow. Titus starved the city to surrender while Jewish factions fought each other inside. Only those who fled to the hills were saved. Some of the disciples lived to see the events take place (v.30).

He foretold some things that are happening now

Many are being deceived by false religions (vv. 5-6, 21-22). Not all that claims to be Christian is truly Christian. All that is miraculous is not from God. Satan's cunning that deceived mankind in the Garden of Eden is still deceiving many today. Do not be deceived, be discerning.

Disasters on a national and international scale can be read about in the daily newspapers and in Mark 13. 'Do not be alarmed,' Jesus says. A war or an earthquake is not the end of the world, unless you live only for material things. Things we take for granted may be taken away (vv.24-25), but that is not the end of the world for the one whose eyes are on heaven.

There will be division in the world between God's people and others. Verses 9-13 speak of Christians being hauled before Jewish and Roman courts. Jesus never left his followers in any doubt that they would suffer persecution. The early church prayed for strength to bear pain and persecution, not for a trouble free life. Many die each year for their faith in Jesus Christ, yet Christians are still willing to live as Christians because they do not live for the immediate, they live for the ultimate.

Jesus foretold some things that are yet to be fulfilled

We can look forward to the coming of the Son of Man (vv.26-27). Jesus will come with great power that will eclipse everything else happening on the earth. He will come in glory that will be joyful for those who see their Saviour, and sorrowful for those who see their Judge. He will *gather* his elect, and those who are his from all over the world will be together with him.

In view of Jesus' imminent return we must *work* (v.34), because we have a task assigned by our Master. We must *watch* (v.33) because we must be ready at any time. We must *wait* (vv.35, 37) because that time is in God's hand. Be awake, be alert, be alive, be active in worship and in witness.

Today's events point to the end of time and the return of our Lord. May Jesus Christ mean everything to you now and always.

Discussion guide for 'Jesus taught the coming of the Son of Man'

1. Describe the permanence of Jesus and his word compared to the transience of the world and human lives, Mark 13:31.
2. Jesus "has not told us everything about the future, but everything we need to know", (first paragraph above). Discuss your understanding of this phrase and say why you agree or disagree with it.
3. How does Mark 13:32 comment on well-meaning Christians who work out timetables for the Lord's return?
Give an approximate idea of what can and what cannot be known.
4. Share how a vision of heaven can keep a Christian at peace even in the middle of huge human disasters, Mark 13:5-8 and verses 24-26.

5. Say in one sentence, *why* so many Christians are still willing to live as Christians, even though many die for their Christian faith every year? See Mark 13:9-13.
6. What does the imminent return of Jesus mean to you, in your own life, today?
7. Do you have any items to pray for from this chapter, or questions to discuss with a mature Christian?