



The Gospel of Mark - Chapter Thirteen

III. Mark 8:27-16:8 - Testing Jesus' Authority in Suffering (continues)

III.b Mark 11:1-13:37 - Entering and judging Jerusalem (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Thirteen

Jesus taught his disciples on two major issues of judgement: the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD70 and the Second Coming of the Christ at the end of the age. He spoke of there being a time of tribulation in which the abomination that causes desolation will appear in the temple, probably a figurative description of the antichrist's disruption of the global church.

Jesus gave clear instructions that the end will come when it is least expected, despite all the signs he gave to indicate it is imminent. Therefore, all disciples in all generations are to be prepared to meet Christ at any moment, while continuing to live their daily lives in service to God.

III.b.iii Mark 13:1-37 - Jesus and the coming judgment

Jesus' discourse about the end times focuses the attention of the disciples on preparedness, on readiness and willingness to suffer, and on having faith and trust in God for all things.

III.b.iii.1 Mark 13:1-31 - The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

In response to Jesus' statement about the future destruction of the temple (v.2), the disciples asked him: <<"**Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?**">> (v.4). Jesus' answer dealt primarily with the second part of their question: <<**what will be the sign**>>, but he also addressed the timing of the coming events, i.e. when.

Verses 5-23 focus on local and world events, i.e. the destruction of the temple, persecution and universal evangelism; whereas vv.24-27 focus on cosmic events, such as the transformation of the known cosmos and the coming of the Son of Man.

The disciples assumed that the destruction of the temple would coincide with the end of time, but Jesus corrected their thinking (v.7 and v.13). Since Jesus predicted these events, believers must not lose heart. The destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in AD70, functioned as a type of the last judgment, which will occur when Jesus finally returns. God already knows about them, and the elect (v.20, v.22 and v.27), will be preserved.

¹ **As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”**

Mark 13:1

Herod the Great expanded the second temple to about double the size of the Solomonic temple. The beauty and size of Herod the Great’s Temple Mount exceeded that of most of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was more than twice the size of the Acropolis in Athens. Its perimeter was 0.96 miles or 1.55 km, and enclosed a space equivalent to one-sixth of the entire city.

What massive stones. One of the stones of the temple complex still remaining measures 45x11.5x12 feet or 13.7x3.2x4m and is estimated to weigh 580,000 kgs.

² **“Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”**

Mark 13:2

Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the temple was fulfilled in AD70 when the Roman army under Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

Not one stone here will be left on another may be intended as a metaphor for total destruction, or it may be understood as something that was literally fulfilled in the destruction of the temple building



Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Francesco Hayez

itself, but not the entire Temple Mount, some of which remains to this day. Titus, son of the emperor Vespasian, led the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the culmination of the Roman Jewish War of AD66-70.

Every one will be thrown down. The future destruction of the temple and Jerusalem would occur on account of its misuse by the leaders: <<**What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others**>> (Mark 12:9), and: <<**As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this**

day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God’s coming to you”>> (Luke 19:41-44). The sacrificial system of the temple cannot, in any case, make sufficient atonement for the sinfulness of mankind: <<It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins>> (Hebrews 10:4).

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,

Mark 13:3

The Mount of Olives or Olivet, with its spectacular view of the Temple Mount, stands just east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley. Jesus and his disciples regularly crossed over Olivet on their way from Jerusalem through Bethphage to Bethany, which lay on the mountain’s eastern slope.

Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately. The first three men were frequently recorded as being part of Jesus’ inner core of disciples, here joined by Peter’s brother Andrew.

⁴ “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

⁵ Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many.

Mark 13:4-6

Many will come in my name. There were many people during that era who claimed to be the Christ for it was the time that many scholars believed that the prophecy of Daniel’s seventy sevens was going to be fulfilled: <<*Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place*>> (Daniel 9:24). This gave rise to many men claiming to be the Messiah, without the capabilities that Jesus had or fulfilling any of the prophecies that Jesus did. This continued into the early years of the church at least, when many false teachers tried to impose themselves on the church: <<*Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have*>> (Jeremiah 29:8), <<*I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them*>> (Acts 20:29-30), <<*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient*>> (Ephesians 5:6), <<*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons*>> (1 Timothy 4:1), <<*In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived>> (2 Timothy 3:12-13), and: <<For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord>> (Jude 4). It will apparently happen again near to the end of the age: <<Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them”>> (Luke 17:22-23).

⁷ When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

Mark 13:7

Throughout church history people have tried to predict the Second Coming of Christ, and point to signs such as significant wars or global unrest as being such a sign, but Jesus says do not be alarmed, for the end is still to come.

⁸ 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.

Mark 13:8

The metaphor of birth pains describes the increase in frequency and duration of these events, indicating that there will be a time of suffering prior to the messianic age: <<*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies*>> (Romans 8:22-23).

⁹ “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. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. ¹¹ 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, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

¹² “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ¹³ Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Mark 13:9-13

Brother will betray brother to death. Amid these troubles, including family divisions: <<*But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell*

you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law>> (Luke 12:50-53), the disciples are to be worldwide, Spirit-led witnesses before both Jewish and Gentile authorities: <<“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs”>> (Mark 7:27-28), <<For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it>> (Mark 8:35), <<“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life>> (Mark 10:29-30), <<And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens>> (v.27).

Flogged in the synagogues. This occurred shortly after Jesus left them when the apostles were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin for teaching in the temple courts: <<*The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name*>> (Acts 5:41), and: <<*They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me*>> (John 15:21). For everyone will hate you because of me: <<*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first*>> (John 15:18).

You will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. Paul did just that: <<*The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. Festus said: “King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Cæsarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write*>> (Acts 25:23-26).

And the Gospel must first be preached to all nations. The Gospel was proclaimed to many at Pentecost: <<*Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galilæans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judæa and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this*

mean?”>> (Acts 2:5-12). From then on, the apostles and other disciples went far and wide until the Gospel has indeed reached almost every area of habitation on the planet.

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, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. On trial before the Sanhedrin: <<*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed*>> (Acts 4:8-10), and Stephen in the same court: <<*But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”*>> (Acts 7:55-56).

The one who stands firm to the end will be saved. This is illustrated by what Jesus had John write to the seven churches in Asia: <<*Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God*>> (Revelation 2:7), <<*Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death*>> (Revelation 2:11), <<*Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it*>> (Revelation 2:17), <<*To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – that one ‘will rule them with an iron sceptre and will dash them to pieces like pottery’ – just as I have received authority from my Father*>> (Revelation 2:26-27), <<*The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels*>> (Revelation 3:5), <<*The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name*>> (Revelation 3:12), and: <<*To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne*>> (Revelation 3:21).

¹⁴ “When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judæa flee to the mountains.

Mark 13:14

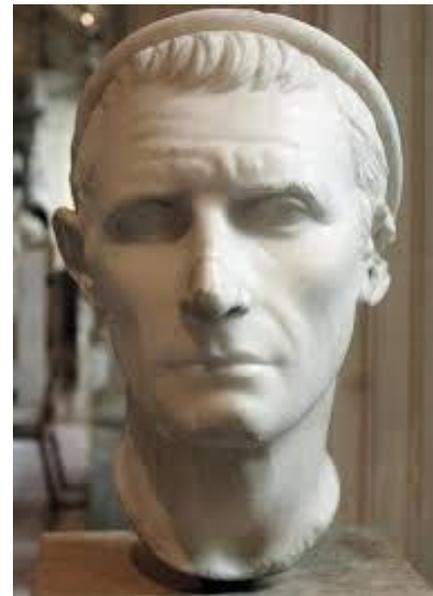
The abomination that causes desolation, taken from: <<*He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination*

that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him>> (Daniel 9:27), <<His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation>> (Daniel 11:31), and: <<From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days>> (Daniel 12:11), points to the Antichrist's ultimate desecration of God's temple, where he ought not to be, which some understand as a literal, rebuilt temple, and others understand as the people of God. Paul refers to him as the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, and John refers to him as the antichrist, which is only mentioned with this name in the NT by John: <<Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour>> (1 John 2:18), <<Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son>> (1 John 2:22), <<This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world>> (1 John 4:3), and: <<Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist>> (2 John 7).

Several times in Jewish history it was thought that this prophecy was being fulfilled – most notably during the days of the Maccabees, when Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king, ordered that an altar to the Greek god Zeus be constructed in the temple (167BC).

He also decreed that swine and other unclean animals were to be sacrificed there, that the Sabbath was to be profaned, and that circumcision was to be abolished. But Jesus clarified that the complete fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy will be found in:

1. The Roman destruction of the temple in AD70.
2. The image of the Antichrist being set up in the last days.



Antiochus IV Epiphanes

Flee to the mountains. The ancient church historian Eusebius reported that, during the Jewish revolt of AD67, Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled when Christians fled to the mountains of Pella (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5.3).

¹⁵ Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. ¹⁶ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.

Mark 13:15-16

This verse indicates that the end will come suddenly and there will be no time for people to think about anything else.

¹⁷ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ¹⁸ Pray that this will not take place in winter, ¹⁹ because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now – and never to be equalled again.

Mark 13:17-19

Tribulation will occur in conjunction with the Antichrist's desecration (v.14). This tribulation will not be confined to Judæa and will be on a scale unprecedented since the beginning of the creation. The flight of Christians from Jerusalem in AD67 anticipated this universal tribulation, but it turned out to be just a localised warning of what is yet to come.

In those days. Jesus in his human nature did not know when this would occur: <<*But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father*>> (v.32).

Pregnant women and nursing mothers! As with wars and national disasters, including droughts and earthquakes, it is always the vulnerable and those with children to care for that are most at risk, or who feel the pain more deeply. If it were to take place in winter, which is a 50% chance for one hemisphere, then the difficulties faced will become even more severe.

Days of distress. This could be for the entire church age: <<*After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed*>> (Daniel 9:26), or at the end of that age: <<*At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered*>> (Daniel 12:1), and: <<*Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand – a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come*>> (Joel 2:1-2).

²⁰ “If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.

Mark 13:20

The universal extent of tribulations will be cut short by the Lord out of his compassion and mercy, although the full extent of the tribulation would be only what sinful mankind would deserve as just punishment for sin.

The elect are not a proud elite but recipients of God's gracious and undeserved call and protection. They are those whom he has chosen, which appears to eliminate human free will in coming to faith, although this is not necessarily so when taken in conjunction with other Scriptures on election and calling.

The so called 'doctrine of a general calling' alludes to the Gospel being proclaimed to all people everywhere, both those who will believe and those who will not. However, Paul also mentions another kind of calling, an effective calling from God that comes powerfully to individuals and brings a positive response. When the Gospel is proclaimed, only some are effectively called. That is, those who are the elect, who respond with true faith: <<*Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him*>> (1 Corinthians 1:22-29). This is consistent with Jesus' statement: <<"For many are invited, but few are chosen">> (Matthew 22:14), for the ones chosen, Greek *eklektos*, which also means selected, are the elect, a term used by Jesus to refer to his true disciples.

²¹ At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. ²² For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Mark 13:21-22

The tribulation (v.19) is accompanied by false messiahs and false prophets. They will lead people astray by performing signs and wonders, which are the actions of the Antichrist. Unlike Scripture, signs and wonders are not clear indicators of God's presence and will. Jesus' remark that even the elect could be deceived emphasises the stunning character of the false prophets' miracles. But God will protect his own, so that they will not believe in a false messiah or prophet.

²³ So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

Mark 13:23

Told you everything ahead of time. Jesus has given due warning to all who will heed his message: <<*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse*>> (Romans 1:20).

²⁴ “But in those days, following that distress,

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;

²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

²⁶ “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

Mark 13:24-26

Verse 24b is based on Isaiah 13:10 and v.25 more loosely on Isaiah 34:4.

Following that distress, i.e. after that tribulation, clearly sets the further statements of Jesus apart from the preceding verses.

The sun, moon and stars. Jesus then described cosmic events in anticipation of the coming of the enthroned Son of Man: <<*“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven”*>> (Mark 14:62).

It is possible that this is entirely literal language, with stars perhaps referring to a large meteor shower. Others take it as a mixture of literal and figurative language, and still others take it as entirely figurative, pointing to political judgment on nations and governments.

The argument in favour of a figurative interpretation is that this verse echoes possibly figurative language about heavenly disturbances described by the OT prophets, such as: <<*The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light*>> (Isaiah 13:10), <<*All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree*>> (Isaiah 34:4), <<*When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light*>> (Ezekiel 32:7), <<*Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine*>> (Joel 2:10), and: <<*“In that day,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight”*>> (Amos 8:9), although this literally occurred during the crucifixion of the Christ.

Those arguing for a literal interpretation point to biblical accounts of actual darkness: <<Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness spreads over Egypt – darkness that can be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or move about for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived>> (Exodus 10:21-23), and: <<From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land>> (Matthew 27:45).

The idea of the stars falling and the heavens being rolled up is mentioned elsewhere in the NT: <<You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end>> (Hebrews 1:12), <<By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat>> (2 Peter 3:7-12), and: <<I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place>> (Revelation 6:13-14).

Whether these events are to be understood as being primarily literal or primarily figurative, it is clear that these will be earth-shattering events, through which all creation will be radically transformed at the return of Christ. Scripture also speaks of the new heavens and the new earth: <<See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind>> (Isaiah 65:17), <<But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells>> (2 Peter 3:13), and: <<Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea>> (Revelation 21:1).

²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

Mark 13:27

Four winds. Matthew records that this event will come with a loud trumpet call: <<And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other>> (Matthew 24:31), which links in elsewhere with Christ’s *Parousia*: <<For the Lord

himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first>> (1 Thessalonians 4:16), and: <<On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicæa." I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire>> (Revelation 1:10-14).

The four winds were highly symbolic in the OT prophecies: <<I will bring against Elam the four winds from the four quarters of heaven; I will scatter them to the four winds, and there will not be a nation where Elam's exiles do not go>> (Jeremiah 49:36), <<Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live'">> (Ezekiel 37:9), <<Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea">> (Daniel 7:2), <<The goat became very great, but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven>> (Daniel 8:8), <<After he has arisen, his empire will be broken up and parcelled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others>> (Daniel 11:4), and: <<"Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north," declares the Lord, "for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven," declares the Lord>> (Zechariah 2:6).

²⁸ "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.
²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door.

Mark 13:28-29

Some have understood the fig tree here as a symbol for the nation of Israel. Refer to comments made on Mark 11:13-14. However, it is more likely that in this case Jesus was just using a familiar event in nature as another illustration: just as the fig tree's branches put forth leaves, giving a sure sign that summer would soon follow, so when you see these things taking place, you know that Christ will come soon.

These things probably refers not to the events of vv.24-27, for they come at the end, but the events of vv.5-23.

Right at the door is the place where the righteous judge will stand: <<Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!>> (James 5:9), and: <<Here I am! I stand at the

door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me>> (Revelation 3:20).

³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

Mark 13:30

This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Several interpretations have been offered for this difficult passage:

1. Some think this generation refers to the disciples who were alive when Jesus was speaking, and all these things refers to the beginning but not the completion of the sufferings described in vv.3-13.
2. Others see in all these things a prediction with multiple fulfilments, so that Jesus' disciples will be both this generation that sees the destruction of the temple in AD70, and also those at the end of the age, who see the events surrounding: <<*the abomination of desolation*>> (v.14).
3. Since 'the generation of' in the OT can mean people who have a certain quality: <<*There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous*>> (Psalm 14:5 ESV), <<*Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob*>> (Psalm 24:6), and the Greek word *genea* in: <<*The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light*>> (Luke 16:8), which can be translated own kind or generation, others understand this generation to refer either:
 - a. To this generation of believers throughout the entire present age, or
 - b. To this evil generation that will remain until Christ returns to establish his Kingdom: <<*Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation*>> (Matthew 12:45), and: <<*As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah*>> (Luke 11:29).
4. Others, particularly dispensational interpreters, understand generation to mean race, which is another sense of Greek *genea*, and think it refers to the Jewish people, who will not pass away until Christ returns.
5. Others understand this generation to mean the generation that sees all these things: <<*Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door*>> (Matthew 24:33), namely, the generation alive when the final period of great tribulation begins. According to this view, the illustration of the fig tree (v.28) shows that when the final events begin, Christ will come soon. Just as: <<*these things*>> in v.29 refers to events leading up to but not including Christ's return, so in v.30 all these things refers to the same events; that is, the events described in vv.3-13.

³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Mark 13:31

My words will never pass away. Jesus claimed that his words, like those of the OT: <<*For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished*>> (Matthew 5:18), are more enduring than creation and are in truth the revealed Word of God: <<*Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail*>> (Isaiah 51:6), and: <<*This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar – the Lord Almighty is his name: “Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,” declares the Lord, “will Israel ever cease being a nation before me.” This is what the Lord says: “Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done,” declares the Lord*>> (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

III.b.iii.2 Mark 13:32-37 - The Day and Hour Unknown

Jesus concludes the chapter by stating that the time for his Second Coming is not something that will be made publically available to the church. Therefore, all disciples of Christ are to live their lives in service to God on a day to day basis, ensuring at all times that they are ready to face their Lord and Saviour when he does finally appear.

³² But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Mark 13:32

Nor the Son. As previously noted, Jesus in his fully human state, did not have the knowledge of when this would be, for it was not something that God would want to be made known, as he requires each and every generation to expect his return within their lifetime. Jesus would later indicate this, shortly before his ascension, in answer to a direct question from his disciples: <<*Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority*>> (Acts 1:6-7).

³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

³⁴ It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back – whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

Mark 13:33-37

Jesus gave this entire discourse about the end times so that all disciples should be prepared but also active in the church, i.e. do not let him find you sleeping. This parable about a man going on a journey displays similarities with the parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-12). The point is perpetual readiness while bearing God-given responsibilities. The sudden return of the master of the house corresponds to the sudden coming of the Son of Man. Instead of speculating about the specific timing of end-time events, all disciples are to be vigilant at all times, and in all generations. That is, they are to watch!