

**The Timing of the End
Mark 13:28-37**

This morning we turn to the study of Christ and the last section of the Olivette Discourse, this sermon that Jesus gives about His return to this earth, His second coming. And, as we continue to see with Scripture and the beauty of how Scripture unfolds, it is so relevant. It is so applicable. It fits perfectly with what we go through, with what we see, with what we talk about, in our current day and age. Just consider the events of this last week. Just consider the wildfires that have plagued southern California, the tragedy that has come upon so many people's lives and the land of southern California. Consider also the political moves that have taken place, how our own president has spoken to the reality of Jerusalem as the hope for being the capital of Israel and the commitment to move in that direction rather than looking at Tel Aviv. These events are undoubtedly marketable events. They are a big deal for the news headlines and what people are seeing, and what happens? As typical, as usual, especially with many Christians, are these headlines. Catch people's attention and right away they begin to speak, and they begin to engage in discussion about what these events really mean. And immediately people start to think end times.

They think, look at these natural disasters and calamities that are coming upon our world. Look at these political moves that are taking place. Look at what is taking place in Israel, in Jerusalem, and the place where God has caused His name to dwell. Look at all these things; is it not obvious and certain that the end is upon us? And so, the speculations begin, and people begin to go off and talk about this is the end. And this is the time when the reality is if we just simply get back to the Word of God, if we just get back to what Jesus has said in Mark 13, we would realize, we would recognize the truth about such events like we've encountered this last week, that is that they are just another event, another sampling of what is to come. They are the beginning of birth pains as Jesus has said, the beginning of labor which will then lead to the birth of the kingdom and the beginning of Christ's rule upon this earth. I mean, even in the beginning of the Olivette Discourse, this is what we saw when Jesus talked about "...nation will rise against nation..." and "...wars and rumors of wars..." and even the other disasters that will come like famines and disease that will come upon the earth. All these things are to be expected.

But Jesus made it clear the end is not yet. Those things are to be expected, so that's what we lived this last week, more signs, more beginnings of labor pains as we continue to see these things unfold. And what're we committed to? The preaching of the gospel in the meantime not the speculation of the end, and not trying to formulate and understand how all this ties together and predicting when this will take place. That's not our job, and that's exactly what Jesus tells us this morning in our text before us. This is the end of the Olivette Discourse, and we finally get to the action, what we are to do. So, what? In regard to all the information Jesus has given, He has given us details. He has told us what, in fact, to expect regarding the end. He has told us what it will look like. And now, He shifts to your attitude, your application, what you must do in light of this knowledge. So, let's look at our text for this morning. Mark 13:28-27; "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. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 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 rooster 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."

This is the point. This is the purpose. This is what we must do in light of what Jesus has said about the end. In light of all the information, in light of the knowledge that has now come towards us, we must act upon it in this way. And Jesus gives it to us in two phases and really two illustrations that come before us. So, let's look at that first illustration that we have before us this morning in verses 28-32, the reality of the end ... the reality of the end. After giving the details, this great illustration leading up to the glorious return of Christ, Jesus shifts to speak about the certainty of the end. This is that the end will be unmistakable. It will be so obvious you cannot miss it. And to do this, He gives us a picture that not just the disciples would relate to but all of us can even relate to. This is the picture of the fig tree in verse

28 ... the picture in verse 28; “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.” He gives us a brief metaphor, an illustration right here about a fig tree. And anybody can understand this.

Really, it’s not just limited to a fig tree. If you think about it, this is a case for all trees. This is how it is. He identifies two indicators of the fig tree that one ought to look for to know that there’s a changing of season upon us; “...as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves...” It’s a simple picture, really, before us. When you see fig trees starting to put out leaves, you know the summer is near. A child understands this is the case with trees. When you see trees losing its leaves and we understand that cold times are coming, the winter is upon us, and then when the leaves start to come back, everyone knows and understands that there’s another change of season before us, and we are coming into warmer times in the summer. In fact, to show that this isn’t just limited to the fig, in Luke 21:29 this parallel account, Luke records Jesus as saying, “And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.”

All the trees are like this. When they begin to put out their leaves, then you know that the changing of seasons has come. It’s a simple characteristic in nature, and it’s observed by all people. The trees act as signs to signal the changing of season, simple enough. Jesus then explains how this basic picture relates to teaching that He has just delivered regarding the end. And this is what we find in verse 29, the parallel. How does this picture now relate to Jesus’ teaching? The parallel verse in 29, we read, “So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.” ... “So also...” That phrase that mentions and shows that this is parallel. Just like you have leaves coming upon a tree and thus the signal of a changing of seasons, so also these events that will take place you know are related to the end. We see the phrase here in the verse, “...when you see these things taking place...” What is Jesus referring to when He says “...these things...” ... “...when you see these things taking place...”? What are “...these things...” that He’s talking about? And the reality is, if we’re just looking at this very sermon that He’s given us, this very text of Mark 13 “...these things...” is referring to the events in verses 14-23, those events that are massive in proportion in comparison to everything else that’s taken place in the history of mankind. These events stand alone. They are

unprecedented. They are unparalleled in terms of their magnitude and impact upon mankind and the earth. There's no question about it.

Just to remind you a little bit of verses 14-23, "...these things..." included that great event that He described in the beginning, "...the abomination of desolation..." (alright?), this event that will defile the temple, as one individual. One individual that we know as the antichrist will set himself up as god and speak blasphemous things, and he will go into the temple, and he will cut off and end the sacrifices and offerings unto God. This is something that was indicated back in the book of Daniel in chapter 9 and chapter 12. This is something that Paul elaborates on in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. He calls this antichrist "...the man of lawlessness..." the man who sets himself up as god. And, of course, Revelation 13 gives us more details about him as the antichrist, and also the false prophet who comes to support him and to gain the whole world to follow after him. He is a blasphemous individual, and he does unprecedented, blasphemous things. Not just that, but in verses 14-23 you remember verse 19 where it was stated, "For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be." Alright? These are the things that we're talking about. We're talking about events that are so grand that there's no way to even compare them to anything else in the history of the earth. They stand out, and they stand alone as unique and terrifying events. And, of course, as Revelation 13:11-15 describes also, verses 20-21 in this chapter, false christs and false prophets will arise performing signs and wonders that will actually lead all astray and even the elect if God had not actually protected them. These are the things we're talking about.

These are the events of the tribulation. This is that great tribulation that we understand from Scripture, that time that is unique in terms of God's judgment coming upon the earth, that time described in Revelation 6, moving on through most of the book of Revelation, that time where there's the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments, the bowl judgments, that all come upon mankind and bring the judgment of God upon this earth. It's a terrible time. It's a unique time, and it's unmistakable. You cannot miss it. Jesus says, "So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates." The comparison is that the tribulation signs of verses 14-23 inform the disciples that Jesus is near. They will in fact, know. Mankind will, in fact, know that when you see those obvious signs of tragedy that Jesus is near, just like the budding and blossoming trees inform

us that the summer is coming. It's simple. Anyone can identify it. Anyone can see this taking place with the tree, so too, will you see this taking place with these massive signs that Jesus has prophesied.

In verse 30, we learn a little bit more about this event, and we see the period, the time, the duration of this event ... the duration of this event and what will take place. Verse 30: "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." ... "Truly, I say to you...", that phrase, that expression that Jesus uses often to indicate this is important. This is significant. You must listen up. He says listen to this; "...this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" ... until all these things take place." This is the strongest possible way to say this, it's like Jesus is saying, "...this generation will [certainly] not pass away before all these things [happen]." These things must happen before this generation can actually pass away. So, we have an obvious question before us, who is "...this generation...?" Who is Jesus talking about when He says "...this generation will not pass away until all these things take place?" Well, let's take a moment here to look a little deeper here into Mark 13 and try and understand who He's talking about. Who is it that He's referring to? We know that throughout His sermon here even starting back in verses 3-4 all the way up to verse 27, we see that Jesus has been saying the pronoun "you," and it's a plural "you" as in saying, "you all." And He's been saying you all will see these things, and some of those things will be false signs that don't mean the end has come. Some of these things will be the real signs that mean the end has in fact come. But you all will see these things, and so the question is, is this referring to Jesus' disciples right in front of Him or is this referring to maybe a future generation?

Well, what's interesting is as you work through it like we have, we've seen that there's times where it's clearly referring to His disciples, and they understood it as such because they did, in fact, see times of persecution. They did, in fact, see times of "...wars and rumors of wars..." They saw these things taking place. They experienced them when they were persecuted and went through the suffering. But then, we noted the obvious shift in verse 14. In verse 14, there is a change in what Jesus was talking about, a kind of a ramping up of the events that took place and how terrible they were. And when he says "you" in those verses, in verses 14-23, we start to think back on the lives of the disciples, and they did not experience what Jesus describes in verses 14-23. They did not experience this "...abomination of

desolation...” They didn’t experience this man coming and setting himself up as god and cutting off the offerings and sacrifices. They didn’t experience this antichrist leading the world astray and deceiving all with his signs and wonders. They didn’t experience these things, and yet Jesus kept saying “you” throughout those verses. So, we have a portion of His sermon here where the “you” is referring to the disciples clearly, and then we have another portion of His sermon where the “you” can’t be referring to His disciples because they didn’t experience those thing.

And then, we look to Mark 13:26 where we read, “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” If Jesus intended this only for the disciples and their generation in front of Him, why would He not just say “you” again? But He changes it to “they” “...then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” And then, we look at verse 29. What was right before? Our verse; “So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.” Again, a reference to this phrase, “...these things...” This generation will witness “...these things...,” and we’ve already defined what “...these things...” are. This is the generation that witnesses and sees the things of verses 14-23. This is the generation who sees the “...abomination of desolation...” This is the generation who sees the blasphemy of cutting off the temple offering and sacrifices. This is the generation who witnesses the flight from Judea, to leave immediately. This is the generation who witnesses the unprecedented tribulation for all of the earth and not just the Jerusalem. This is the generation who experiences the days being cut short for the sake of the elect so that all of humanity does not perish. This is the generation who witnesses the signs and wonders of the false prophet and the antichrist. To be clear, this generation that we’re seeing here in this verse is the generation that experiences the tribulation and the return of Christ to set up His kingdom. This is referring to a future generation.

This is not referring to the generation in front of Jesus, the disciples at that time. This is referring to a generation down the road that would experience the events of verses 14-23, the generation that would experience the tribulation. So, what’s Jesus point in saying this? Why would He make this statement? In verse 30, Jesus is stating that all these events of the end, the tribulation and His second coming, all these events will take place within the time period of one generation. This is not something that will be a slow cook. This is not something that’s going to take place over a grand period of

time. And many Christians would like to believe that. They'd like to see that this is a long, unfolding of events, and they'll gradually get worse and worse and worse and worse, and it's all a part of the second coming of Christ. And that's not the case. Jesus says there'll be a notable moment. There'll be an obvious shift in what's taking place on the world. It will get from bad to the unexpected in how worse it will become. It will become so terrible that you'll note it and it will happen within the duration of one generation. It's not going to happen over centuries. It's going to happen over one generation time period. This is what He's saying in verse 30; "Truly, I say to you, this generation [that experiences these things] will not pass away until all these things take place" until all the events of the tribulation and Jesus' coming to this earth.

And to be clear about this, Jesus delivers a final statement in verse 31 about His words and His own message. It is permanent - the permanence of this teaching - the permanence of His words on this topic about the end, the permanence in verse 31; "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." Jesus refers to the obvious, that the bitter end will eventually come. All things will be done away with. There is no preserving of anything. Everything, the heaven and the earth and all it contains will be done away with. Everything will be undone. The heaven and earth will pass away, and God will bring in a new heaven and a new earth. But what does Jesus say? Even in spite of all that, He says, "...my words will not pass away." Again, to say this with the greatest strength possible, His words will certainly "...not pass away." Despite the final and total disposal of all things, even heaven and earth themselves, the certainty of Jesus' words are fixed and permanent. And we have to ask, why does Jesus have to say this? Why does He have to make such a statement? Jesus has to say that what He has preached here, what He has given about His second coming is not guess work. It's not open to some type of reinterpretation. It's not a probability that He's pretty certain about. It is an absolute certainty. These words, not just all the words of Christ, but even more specifically these words about the second coming "...will not pass away." They are permanent.

So, why make such a statement? Why does Jesus have to say this? Well, let's think. If Jesus delayed in His second coming, if He took His time, what would happen? What might start to happen? The disciples, you could imagine, might become uneasy as time goes on, and Jesus hasn't come back yet, and they start to think, okay, I thought Jesus said He was coming back.

This is interesting He's still not back. Scoffers and mockers would even begin to insult the followers of Christ and the disciples themselves, and this is exactly what took place as in 2 Peter 3:1-7, Peter says be on guard. These people are going to come, and they'll insult you. They'll say, where is this Jesus you speak of? "Where is the promise of his coming?" You said that's what He promised, and He prophesied that He would return, and yet, where is He? Here you are continuing to preach the Word, here you are continuing to suffer and be persecuted, and yet your Jesus has not returned. This is what scoffers and mockers will do. Well, no matter what the future will bring, the words of Christ will be preserved. This is what the disciples needed to know. No matter what they began to experience, no matter what hardship, no matter how long it was going to take, they needed to come back to this and remember the anchor point that Jesus gave here, that this is certain. This particular truth is certain, and they would need it because time would not get easier for them. Times would just get harder and harder until many of them would be killed for their faith. And so, to come back and they would not doubt that Christ would return, but they would hang their hat upon, they would rest upon the truth that Jesus' words would not pass away. They are permanent. They are fixed.

So, what kind of people ought we to be, you and me? Should we look for a different understanding of Jesus' words here in the Olivette Discourse? Should we start to become embarrassed because we're not really the time of the disciples? We're now two thousand years later, and it's getting more embarrassing. You think, oh, man, Jesus still isn't back. Oh, man, this looks really bad for us. Oh, man, the world starts to think that we're stupid, and we don't know what we're talking about, and we're foolish. So, what do we do? Do we start to try and get Jesus off the hook and make Jesus not look so bad? So, we start to change what Jesus really said, and we start to maybe change what He really meant? Maybe He was saying something else. Maybe what He meant when He was saying some of these things is that it was all supposed to take place in history. Maybe when He said these things and prophesied these things they were all going to be fulfilled at the time when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. Maybe that's what Jesus was saying, and then Jesus doesn't look so bad, and then Jesus doesn't look like He doesn't know what He's talking about, and we look justified, and we look vindicated before the world. Is that what we're supposed to do? Or, do we come back to this promise where Jesus says, "...my words will not pass away"? I don't care how long it takes. I don't care how long you're waiting

for "...my words will not pass away." Maybe we as believers should remain faithful to what He has said, knowing that He who promised that is faithful. He who promised this is, in fact, faithful.

In the year 2017, we have seen things turn from bad to worse. This is what Paul prophesied for mankind. In 2 Timothy 3, he talks about the end times and what you can expect of people becoming worse and more immoral, a terrible time. But Jesus' words still remain permanent and unchanged. You and I know enough to know the difference between the false displays of the end and the actual end itself. When the real end comes, you will not be mistaken. When the real end comes according to what Jesus says, you cannot miss it ... you cannot miss it. And so too, just like with a tree, when its leaves come you know the summer is here upon us; so too, with these events and the return of Christ, and Jesus has promised this. And He is, in fact, faithful and trustworthy. So, on the one hand, we know that the coming of Christ and the events of the end are absolutely certain.

On the other hand, we learn something else about the return of Christ in the end, and this is what comes in verses 32-37. We learn about our response that we ought to have - the response that we ought to have to the end in verses 32-37. The first thing we see is a description. Again, another picture that He gives us, an illustration that we will look into in these verses. And the clear statement that actually sets off for this illustration comes in verse 32 where we learn of the anonymous timing, that it is unknown as far as the timing is concerned - the timing is unknown. Reading verse 32; "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Jesus states clear and obvious, "...no one knows..." That's the plain statement; "...no one knows..." ... "...that day or that hour..." of the fulfillment of the end times despite all the doomsday prophets or Bible code calculators that exist in our time. And they continue to come. These people surface from time to time, and they make their predictions. They make their calculations, and they say that the world will end at such and such a day or such and such a time. And a not too recent example, but one that is well-known, is the example of Harold Camping. You might remember him. Harold Camping predicted the end of the world three times, and then he struck out. In September 7, 1994, he said (that was the first time) that the end would come. That obviously didn't happen, so he recalculated and came up with May 21, 2011, one that many of us might be familiar with as there were even signs around here in town and people

promoting this. And of course, that was wrong, so he kicked it back into the later month of October 21, 2011. Well, none of these things were correct, and Harold Camping passed away and went to be with the Lord in 2013. But he was insisting on knowing. He even had a slogan with these dates when he predicted the end of the world, saying, “The Bible guarantees it” ... “The Bible guarantees it.” That’s how certain he was, and he even had his own website ‘wecanknow.com.’ An obvious slap in the face to the teaching of Jesus right here. Alright? This was ridiculous, and none of these things were fulfilled.

Jesus not only stated that no one knows the day or the hour, but He added, “... not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son...” do not know the day or the hour of the end or His return. After such a strong statement about the eternity of Jesus’ teaching in words in verse 31, we now have this interesting statement about His knowledge. So, we have this strong statement about the teaching of Christ that is that His “...words will not pass away.” His words will most certainly remain, and yet in verse 32, we now have a limitation, somewhat of a limitation, in the knowledge of Christ as it’s stated. How is it that Jesus doesn’t know the day or hour of His return? How is that possible? It seems a little uneasy for us as we worship Christ and sing to Him, and yet, somehow, He doesn’t have this knowledge as He states it here? It’s actually quite simple, and it relates to the season of Christmas we’re even celebrating. Jesus limited Himself in several ways when He took on flesh and came to this earth. He obviously existed in eternity past with His Father. He shared His glory. He had perfect fellowship with the Father and the Spirit and the Son together in the Trinity. They were obviously completely independent, not needing us, not needing mankind at all and dwelling in glory. Yet, when the plan of redemptive history was set into motion, it was known that Jesus would humble Himself, submit to the Father’s will and come to this earth as a man.

He would willingly obey, and He would willingly come and take on human form. It’s really the teaching we’re already aware of from Philippians 2:5-8; “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” So, what did this mean because, obviously in Jesus’ life, we know that He didn’t go

around displaying His glory at all times? He would have blinded and killed everyone. We only see that brief moment when He was up on the mountain and the transfiguring happened, and He gave the disciples a glimpse into His glory. So, Jesus chose to cover these things up. He chose to limit Himself. He chose to veil these certain attributes and aspects of His glory. Jesus did everything He did on this earth to remain in agreement with the Father's will. All that He did was for the purpose of pleasing His Father. So, what did that include? That included His willful restriction of His knowledge of this particular detail. That included His willingness to obey and not have the knowledge of the day or the hour as He has spoken here. Even though Jesus displayed His omniscience at other times in His ministry, there were other times when it was appropriate. And it was the Father's will for Jesus to, in fact, know the details of people's lives as He healed them and did His miracles and taught them truth. But, of course, at this moment, at this point of His life and ministry on earth, it was not appropriate for Him to know the day or the hour.

However, we know where Jesus is now. We know that He is in fact resurrected and ascended into heaven. And so, it would be too much for us to say that He doesn't know it still, when He made this statement while on earth in the context of talking to His disciples. Jesus' overall point is clear. No one knows that specific day or hour. No one does. You can't calculate it. You can't predict it. So, given that truth, given that obvious reality, what kind of attitude and response should that produce? That's what we find in verse 33 as He continues an alert attitude - the alert attitude that people must have. Verse 33; "Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come." Jesus calls His disciples to an attitude of alert sobriety. They need to be awake. They must watch and lookout for Christ's return. If one does not know when something will happen, their only option is to be on the lookout for it. This was the reason why God gave the disciples enough information to see what the end would look like and what the end would definitely not look like. He gave them enough detail to know when events would take place, if that was, in fact, the end or not. But He withheld these details from them about the day and the hour so that their living, so that their life, might actually be one of awake and alert attitude.

The disciples didn't have enough information to sit back and wait until that final moment as so many people do, as is the trend of mankind. When you have a deadline, when you have knowledge of the day or the hour of any

type of project or thing that's taking place, you procrastinate. That is the obvious, and yet God withholds this so that they would not, so that they would simply act and live every moment knowing that it could be that time for Christ to come back. Recently this week, as we've already mentioned the fires that plagued southern California and left several even homeless in the most tragic display, these fires were unexpected for those who were displaced. No one was packing up their house already when fires came. No one was thinking that this is the time so let me go ahead and get everything packed up in boxes. No one was preparing for this. Instead, they had people coming to their house, telling them evacuate. You have one hour or less. That's it. In the same way, the return of Christ is not something that one can pace out and prepare for over time. This isn't something to go, oh, I still have time. It's off there in the future. It's not something where you say, ah, I'll wait until I'm older in life and my responsibilities shift around a little bit, and then I've got time in the schedule to prepare for this. It's not how it works. It can happen at any moment. The only option therefore is to live every moment with the expectation of Christ's return. It's the only option, to "Be on guard, keep awake" because you have no idea.

In verse 34, He gives the second picture for us, the analogy that we see. It is a brief and very unspecific analogy in verse 34; "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." This is this illustration that He gives, and it's amazing how just vague it is. An unidentified man, we know nothing about him, going on some type of journey that we know nothing about. It's unspecific, and as he's preparing to leave, he's talking to his servants, and we know nothing about the arrangements that he's making with anybody or anything except for one, the doorkeeper ... the doorkeeper. That's it. That's the specific focus of this picture. Jesus draws attention to the doorkeeper's responsibility "...to stay awake..." That's it. "...to stay awake..." The man may return from his journey at any time, and the doorkeeper must be ready and awake to unlock the door and welcome his master home. This is it. That's his only responsibility, and he doesn't get the details. He doesn't get the privilege of knowing when this master would return from this journey.

Jesus takes this brief and simple illustration and applies it to His disciples in verses 35-36 - the application in verses 35-36; "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, or in the morning - lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.” This is what the disciples must understand. It’s a simple picture. Just like the doorkeeper, they had to stay awake. They must stay awake. Jesus even identifies Himself as the master. He states they don’t know when He will return. They don’t get that privilege. They don’t get that knowledge. He gives examples of when it could be, and all the examples are the most inconvenient time at night. All the examples are evening after sundown or midnight or early dark morning when the rooster crows or in the early morning when one is finally starting their day. Since all the watches of the night are options for when the master might return, the only option is to stay awake. There is no period, there is no chunk of the day where one could take a nap or lie down or go attend to some other business. All parts of the day needed to be devoted to this one responsibility, staying awake ready for the master’s return. It would be embarrassing and disgraceful if the master would return and find the servants sleeping. The disciples needed to live with this expectation and hope. This is the eager expectation and hope they have. When you look at the rest of the New Testament, you see when they write, they don’t write with such a casual nature. They don’t live in such a way that there’s no urgency. All of them, understanding the imminent return of Christ, it is any moment, and they write to you and me in such a way as to continue that theme. You must be ready. You must be alert. You must put on the “...armor of God...” You must be prepared for battle. You must be ready at all times for you don’t know ... you don’t know when He might return.

To make this hit home a little bit for you and me, we come to verse 37 and the end of our text, and we see the all-encompassing command ... the all-encompassing command. This is not something limited to one person, to one generation. Look at the simple statement of verse 37; “And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.” ... “Stay awake.” Jesus opens this command to everyone and makes it ever relevant and applicable even to you and me here today, you and me here in the church. This wasn’t a teaching that was only for the disciples. This wasn’t teaching for one generation there. This was a teaching for everybody ... for everybody, you and me, even as we’re here. We must be primarily concerned with being prepared for Christ’s return. We must stay awake. We have to. This has to be our concern. And you might be thinking, but if I understand correctly, it sounds like there’s going to be a time of tribulation so maybe if I play my cards correctly, I just wait. I just wait until that time of tribulation comes, and then I start to think, okay,

maybe I'll get my life in order. That is absolutely foolish. That is terrible thinking. Scripture teaches that Christ's return will begin with bringing the church to Himself to meet Him in the clouds in the moment that we know as the rapture.

This is something that Paul taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, this expectation that Jesus will in fact come and take the church to Himself. He will come and bring the church out of that great time. The church will not have to experience that time of judgment and tribulation that comes upon the earth, but the church will be taken to Himself so that they might be with Him, that we might be with Him while the judgment is poured out upon this earth. So, to wait is foolish, to wait and to act like you have time to make a decision is absolutely wrong. It's an utter fallacy, and it fails to listen to one simple command, "Stay awake." Anticipate. Look forward to, eagerly long for and expect the return of Christ. To do anything else proves where your very heart is to begin with, that you don't bow down to Christ as King, and He's not Lord of your life. What a horrendous position to be in. The expectation of rapture for the church must motivate us to "Stay awake." There's no other option. We don't have time to gather our belongings. We don't have time to set our spiritual house in order. We don't have time to sit there and to start to order things in such a way to prepare our hearts because we see Jesus coming. We must be ready.

We must order our life now. We must live now for the return of Christ at any moment. And what does this even look like because it doesn't look like you and me staying here twenty-four seven for the next week and not leaving this place? We don't sit here and think that this is waiting because we're in the church or something like that. Waiting and eagerly expecting the return of our Lord and Savior means that we are doing the very things He would have us to do so that we are not embarrassed or in utter disgrace when He returns. We are about the work of the Lord. Even Paul said that we must be about the work of the Lord. We must be even working with our hands. We must continue to live life here in a responsible fashion, yet everything must be done in such a way to please and bring glory to our Master. What a shame it would be to bring dishonor to His name, to be sinning, and to be neglecting Him at the moment when He comes for His church. It's not an option for us. We need to consider the one responsibility that we have, "Stay awake." "Be on guard..." Be alert. Be awake. This is a part of the gospel message. The

gospel message is not a message simply that states you are forgiven for your sins because you have believed in Jesus and what He did in His death on the cross.

The gospel message continues and states that He will come back, and He will make everything that is wrong right. He will establish His Kingdom, and you are either on the winning team or you're on the losing team. How do you identify yourself? How do you really recognize that you are on the winning team? You are alert, awake, about the business of the Lord. This must be our goal. This must be our aim. This is what it means to be Christian. It is not something where you are saved in a moment of time, and now you sit back and wait for that day when Christ calls you to Himself. No. You are eagerly waiting. You are waiting in expectation of doing His will, about His work not your own. This is our goal. This is what Valley Bible needs to do. This is the proper application of such teaching about the end times. It is so wrong if we were to read this text or Revelation or any other text about the end times from the Bible and think, that's interesting. That's great trivia. I'm going to file that away in my mind now. I have a timeline now. I understand. Just to simply let it be information for the sake of being information is failing to apply that truth to our lives. If you have properly understood just how momentous these events are that come upon the earth and the return of Christ and His glory, then it will show in your life. You will live like He is coming back, and you will live like it could take place any moment. And everyone will see that in your life. It will be obvious and evident. Let that be true for you as an individual, and let that be true for us as a church.