

### Verses 24-31 refer to the fall of Jerusalem

Everything in Mark 13:1–23 refers to the fall of Jerusalem. In Mark 13:32–37 Jesus comes to speak of His 'second coming'. But what about the verses in between? Here Bible scholars have different opinions, especially in the light of verses 30–32, '*...this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened ... but of that hour no one knows...*'.

Some think Mark 13:24–31 refers to Jesus' second coming but that Jesus was mistaken in thinking it would take place in His own time. No consistent Christian can believe such a view of Jesus.

Some have said the word 'generation' refers to the people of Israel. The nation of Israel, it is said, will not pass away until these things have happened. But this is not the meaning of the word 'generation'.

Some think verses 24–31 refer to the second coming of Jesus but that Jesus made no mistake about what would happen within one generation. These expositors tend to say verse 30 refers to what is **starting** in Jesus' time and goes on indefinitely. For me, these expositors are not convincing in their exposition of verse 30.

Some think – and I agree with them – that verses 24–31 refers to the fall of Jerusalem.

### The fall of Jerusalem a foretaste of the second coming of Jesus

**Mark 13:24–31 refers to the fall of Jerusalem, coming as a foretaste of the second coming of Jesus.**

First of all one must realise that the '*coming of the Son of Man*' does not always refer to Jesus' 'Second Coming'. In Daniel 7:13 the Son of Man comes to the Father to receive a kingdom. In His resurrection and ascension there was a coming of Jesus to the Father and Jesus received His kingdom. The outpouring of the Spirit, the progress of the church and the fall of Jerusalem were all ways of seeing '*the Son of Man coming in clouds*', that is, seeing the fulfilment of Daniel 7:13.

• "End of the world language"

The language of Mark 13:24–25 is not literal. It is Old Testament language speaking of a great change in events coming through the fall of a city. The language used of the fall of Israel's enemies<sup>□1</sup> is now applied to Israel itself. Such events may take place visibly<sup>□2</sup> even before the end of the world. When the end comes the very earth will collapse before the presence of Jesus<sup>□3</sup>. But for the moment the language of the end of the world is used of the fall of cities and of empires. Here Jesus referred to the end of Israel's special position. The destruction of the temple was a sign of a new day when salvation would not involve being a Jew or being tied to the Mosaic law.

□1 Isaiah 13:10; 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7

□2 see Luke 23:44

□3 2 Peter 3:12

• Within the lifetime of His generation

The fall of Jerusalem is the proof that Jesus has come to His kingdom. The generation after Jesus would see it themselves. '*Seeing the Son of Man coming in clouds*'<sup>□1</sup> does not refer to the second coming of Jesus but to the fulfilment of Daniel 7:13. Daniel 7:13 gets fulfilled in stages. Jesus came to the Father to receive a kingdom. Jesus repeatedly says this takes place within the lifetime of His generation

□1 13:26

(i) Matthew 16:27, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26;

(ii) Matthew 10:23;

(iii) Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27;

(iv) Matthew 26:64, Mark 14:62, Luke 22:69). Matthew 26:64 speaks of it being true '*from now on*'; so does Luke 21:27. Matthew 28:18 has the same idea (echoing Daniel 7:14); so does Matthew 19:28.

The fulfilment of Daniel 7:13–14 takes place

(i) In the resurrection and ascension of Jesus when He came **to** the Father to receive His kingly authority. It takes place

(ii) In the fall of Jerusalem, when a striking judgement was seen which proved Jesus was sitting on the throne of glory, and

(iii) It is fulfilled in the visible 'Second Coming' of Jesus. Everything in Mark 13:1–25 refers to the fall of Jerusalem; so does verse 26.

• Daniel 7:13-14 fulfilled in stages

Verse 27 may refer to earthly 'messengers' preaching the gospel. The word 'angels' also means 'messenger'. If literal angels are intended it must be remembered that the blowing of a trumpet in the Old Testament was the way of announcing a new move in the progress of God's people (see Numbers 10:2 where trumpets were

blown to announce that Israel was to go another stage in its travels; see also Isaiah 27:13 where the blowing of a trumpet signals a great deliverance).

Verses 28–31 make the point that these events are soon to take place, in the days of the apostles themselves. It soon will be ‘summer time’, a pleasant time when many things take place. The first generations of the church were a time of great expansion and spiritual power.

All of this point to the fact that verses 24–31 refer to the fall of Jerusalem.

- *Jerusalem destroyed – God’s kingly power in Israel taken away*

About forty years after Jesus was crucified, Israel ceased to be a special people with institutions to enlighten the world. The Mosaic law ceased. The temple ceased to exist. Animal sacrifices ceased. Special holy days such as Passover time and the Day of Atonement were no longer any part of God’s requirement. God’s kingly power in Israel was taken away. Jerusalem was destroyed.

### 32-37 The Second and final coming of Jesus

The day is:

**Verses 32–37 refer to the Second Coming of Jesus.** Jesus begins with ‘*But!*’ ‘*But of that day no one knows...*’. Jesus contrasts the fall of Jerusalem which some of the disciples would see take place in their lifetime, with the Second Coming of Jesus which was totally undated. There was a sign for the first of these events – the ‘abomination of desolation’. But there was no similar sign of the second event. The Coming of Jesus is at a totally unknown time.

- *Totally unknown*

**The day of Jesus’ final coming is totally unknown.** No ordinary human being knows. No angel knows. Even Jesus did not know while He was on earth what was the day of His Second Coming.

- *To encourage us to watch and pray*

**The day of Jesus’ final coming is to encourage us to be watchful and prayerful.** Jesus can ‘come’ (in one way or another) at any time. So we are to be ready at any and at every time for His intervention.

- *Delayed*

**The day of Jesus’ final coming is to be delayed.** The early church did not dogmatically insist Jesus would come soon. Mark 13:35 and other passages clearly taught that there would be a delay. The situation is like that of a house- owner going away for an indefinite period.

- *A test of wakefulness*



**The day of Jesus’ final coming is to test our wakefulness.** Jesus will certainly come at an unexpected time. He wants us to be ready to rise instantly when He comes because we have been gripped with the conviction that He could come at any time.

- *Jesus’ last word is ‘Watch!’*

Jesus’ last word is ‘Watch!’ We must get used to being watchful. We must make it a regular habit to be ready for Him to come and enquire into how we are living for Him, how we are being faithful.

Jesus comes in more than one way. If it is not His final coming we shall experience, then it will be His coming in some other form. Sometimes Jesus can do something which, although it is not the end of the world it is the end of our world. Sometimes He may come to take us to Himself. Sometimes He decides to ‘take a look’ at what is happening in our lives. He decides to investigate and reward and chasten according to what He finds.

*‘What I say to you, I say to everyone: watch!’*

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