

Introduction

1. Last week we began the second of two explanatory sections in Mark's Gospel:
 - a. Unlike Matthew's gospel, Mark focuses more on the events of Jesus' life than what He taught
 - b. However, there are two sections in Mark's gospel where he focuses on the teaching of Jesus and these two sections serve to explain the surrounding chapters
 - 1) The first is Mark 4:1-34 where Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of God and it explained the various responses He got from people in the chapters before and after it
 - 2) The second is Mark 13 which we began last week which focuses on the things which lead up to Christ's return
 - a) In the chapters immediately preceding and following this section Jesus is instructing His followers on what it means to be a genuine disciple
 - b) This section helps explain what that is necessary—they will face difficult times and will need to stay alert and watchful for His return
2. We covered the first half of this section last week which addressed the events and signs that will precede the destruction of the temple, and the return of Christ and the end of the age
3. Today we cover the second half which focuses on our need to be on alert and what it means to be ready for His return
4. There are two imperatives (e.g. commands) that I am going to focus on today to form our outline:
 - a. The first is RECOGNIZE: in order to be ready for Jesus' return we must recognize the nearness and certainty of His return (28-32)
 - b. The second is KEEP ON ALERT: in order to be ready for Jesus' return we must remain on alert

A. In order to be ready for Jesus' return we must recognize the nearness and certainty of His return (28-32)

1. Jesus begins with a parable to highlight the nearness of His return (READ 28-29)
 - a. When the fig trees branches become tender and leaves appear, it is an indicator that Summer is near (28)
 - b. In the same way, when we witness the things Jesus describes in verses 5-23 we are to understand that His return is near:
 - 1) **“these things”** refers to the events Jesus described in vs. 5-23 which is a summary of what Jesus' disciples will experience ***before*** His return (but not including it):
 - a) This includes false christs, wars, famine, earthquakes, persecution, betrayal, arrest, even death
 - b) These are things that followers of Jesus have faced ever since Jesus' ascension into Heaven, and they are continuing in ever increasing intensity
 - c) Up in verse 7 Jesus told His disciples not to be alarmed by such things because they ***must*** take place before He returns
 - d) In verse 9 and following He told His disciples that their arrests and persecution would serve as a testimony for His sake before rulers and kings

- 2) We learn here in v. 29 that because of these things, we are to “**recognize**” (NASB) that Jesus’ return is near:
 - a) Paul uses the Greek word for experiential knowledge here which is often translated as a coming to know, perceiving, or understanding through experience
 - b) Here Jesus uses it as an imperative—in essence warning us to recognize or come to understand that His return is near because we experience these things
- 3) So, what does it mean that His return is “**near**”?
 - a) In this verse “**near**” is defined for us as “**right at the door**”
 - b) We can rule out the idea that it meant a short period of time because it’s been nearly 2000 years and we’re still waiting
 - c) Peter dealt with this issue himself when addressing critics over the seeming delay in Christ’s return in the first century (READ 2 Peter 3:3-9)
 - d) So, it’s clear that we are not to understand “near” here from our perspective, but God’s perspective and purpose in light of His redemptive plan
 - e) The picture Jesus presents is that He is standing right outside the door, just waiting to come in, but He is being patient because He wants no one to perish
 - f) So, to recognize that His return is near means that we understand through what we see happening around us and to us that He is just outside the door waiting to return
2. The next two verses focus on the certainty of Jesus’ return (READ 30-32):
 1. The word translated “truly” is the Greek word for amen and expresses the concept of certainty, dependability and assurance
 2. Jesus used the word often in His teaching to stress the truthfulness and dependability of what He taught, and He does so here
 3. He even emphasizes this by adding that while Heaven and Earth will pass away, His Words would not
 4. In this instance, He was assuring His disciples that all of the things that would **precede** His return would happen within their generation:
 - a) Many attempts have been made to redefine “this generation” to mean something other than “this generation” but there is no need to do that
 - b) What Jesus declared was that “these things”—the events described in vs. 5-23—would take place during their lifetime, and history proves they did and they are continuing to happen even today
 5. What Jesus did not promise was that He would return within that generation—because no one except God the Father knows when that will occur (32): “**But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.**”
 - a) The change in topic from the things preceding His return (“**these things**”) to His actual return is indicated by the phrase “**But of that day or hour**”
 - b) “**that day**” is an eschatological term used throughout the Bible to refer to the Day of the Lord which is both a time of judgment and redemption
 - c) The New Testament ties this to the return of Jesus:
 - READ 2 Thessalonians 1:10
 - READ 2 Timothy 1:8-12 & 4:6-8

3. So the first thing we learn here is that in order to ready for the Lord's return we have to understand both the nearness of His return and the certainty of it—we may not know exactly when He will return but we can be certain that He will

B. In order to be ready for Jesus' return we must remain alert (READ 33-37)

1. Jesus uses the word **“alert”** four times in these five verses—what do you think He's trying to tell us <grin>?
 - a. The Greek word He uses here technically means to keep yourself awake
 - b. It's used figuratively in the NT to refer to being on the lookout, staying alert
 - c. He drives home His point with a parable about a man who goes on a journey:
 - 1) The master is Jesus
 - 2) The journey represents Jesus' returning to His Father's house and the time until His return
 - 3) The disciples (us) are the slaves he trusts to care for his business while He's gone
 - 4) They don't know when He will return—it could be at any time, evening, night or morning
 - 5) So, just as they must keep alert and watchful so he doesn't return and find them asleep
2. The other gospels provide details on how to stay alert as we wait for Jesus to return:
 - a. We stay alert by guarding our hearts from getting weighted down by sin and the worries of this life: READ Luke 21:34-35
 - b. We stay alert by praying: READ Luke 21:36
 - c. We stay alert by demonstrating faithfulness: READ Matthew 24:44-51
 - d. We stay alert by being wise: READ Matthew 25:1-12
 - e. We stay alert by investing the gifts and abilities God has given us to further His kingdom: READ Matthew 25:14-30