

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME THREE

STUDY SEVEN

A Prophet We Can Trust

Mark 13:1–37

Father, guide us into Your truth and away from error as we learn to follow the teachings of Jesus—accurately, clearly, daily, and practically.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EDGAR C. WHISENANT predicted the date of Christ’s return in his book *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be* in 1988. His book was a hit, selling more than 4.5 million copies. When Christ didn’t come, though, he recalculated and set a new date . . . in 1989. He was wrong again, so he set a date in 1993, and then 1994! Still no return of Christ.

People who set dates for the end times feed our natural curiosity about the future. The videos of their predictions attract millions of views. Their books generate massive buzz. With conviction, they declare the day of judgment: “The end will come on . . .” Who wouldn’t want to know?

We can become overly preoccupied with the subject, however, and entranced by speakers who thread Bible prophecy into world events as easily as a string through beads. Yes, and we begin to panic. Our anxious eyes get fixed on the clock and on the calendar for that day . . . until the GPS of these false prophets begins to say, “Recalculating.”

Reacting to all the hype, some swing to the opposite extreme. They become cynical, considering prophecy irrelevant and scoffing at those who make too much of it. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll seek a healthy balance, becoming neither gullible nor cynical but expectant.

As the day of His crucifixion drew near, Jesus communicated important information about the future to His disciples. Jesus is a prophet we can trust. His goal was to lift their eyes to the horizon and fill their hearts with *hope*—which is what we need most of all in these difficult days.



INSIGHT FOR LIVING



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

A Prophet We Can Trust

Mark 13:1–37



PREPARE YOUR HEART

James wrote to believers going through hard times: “If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you” (James 1:5). So, express your need for God’s insight as you study the words of Jesus.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As the sun set on a long day of teaching, Jesus and His disciples left the temple area, heading across the Kidron Valley toward the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem. Just a few days earlier, Jesus had ridden a donkey into Jerusalem along this same path. Now, as He retraced this route on foot, His heart grew heavy with sorrow. The leaders of the nation had rejected Him as their Messiah. Judgment instead of blessing would rain down on the people Jesus loved.

The future was the last thing on the disciples’ minds. Glancing back, they were mesmerized by the beauty of the temple, which shone like a brilliant white beacon.

As you open your Bible to Mark 13, step into the scene with the disciples and see the magnificence of Herod’s Temple. Hear their questions and listen to Jesus’ answers. From His teaching, we’ll seek a balanced understanding of prophecy as we set our hearts on Christ’s return.



Observation: Jesus Teaches on the Mount of Olives About the Future

Observation is an essential first step in studying a biblical text.¹ Read the verses in a couple of Bible versions. Don’t try to decipher the meaning quite yet. Just read what the passage says, looking for metaphors, cause-and-effect statements, contrasts, and repeated words.

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Predicting Disaster—Mark 13:1–2

It all started with a backward glance in [Mark 13:1–2](#). What comment did one of the disciples make as Jesus was leaving the temple that day? What was Jesus' response?

Now we're left with our imagination. We've seen massive stones. We've seen beautiful buildings. Now you can't hear it, but right after Jesus' statement, there is a loud sucking sound as they draw air into their lungs, finding it hard to believe. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Avoiding Panic—Mark 13:3–8

Jesus' answer led to a lesson on the future that He delivered after they reached the Mount of Olives. His teaching has become known as the "Olivet Discourse." As Jesus sat in a spot overlooking the grand eastern gate that led into the expansive courtyards and the temple itself, what questions did Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask Jesus in [Mark 13:3–8](#)? What was Jesus' response?

Isn't that an interesting opening? They didn't ask about someone misleading; they wanted to know when and what. But He knows what's coming. He said, "Be careful. Listen. Don't let anyone mislead you." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Enduring Mistreatment—Mark 13:9–13

Read [Mark 13:9–13](#). What did Jesus say would happen to those who declare Christ as Lord?

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Escaping Judgment—Mark 13:14–23

Read [Mark 13:14–23](#). What did Jesus say they would see standing where he should not be? What specific instructions did He give to escape judgment? Why should they not believe if anyone were to say to them, “Look, here is the Messiah” (Mark 13:21)?

Staying Alert—Mark 13:24–37

Read [Mark 13:24–37](#). According to this passage, what will happen in those days after the tribulation?

What lesson must they learn from the parable of the fig tree in 13:28–32?

How many times did Jesus warn His followers to “stay alert” in 13:33–37 (NASB)? Why should they stay alert?

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Interpretation: Warnings About the Future

Some of the events Jesus mentioned in the Olivet Discourse have already taken place. Others will happen in our future. And some have a dual fulfillment—though they’ve come to pass, a more complete fulfillment awaits.

In Mark 13:2, Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple that would occur decades later in AD 70 when Rome conquered Jerusalem. The disciples assumed that the end of the temple—still in their future—would signal the end of the world.

Consult Pastor Chuck’s commentary [Insights on Mark](#), or look up [13:1–8](#) in [Constable’s Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#). Jesus wanted His disciples to know that the events that *precede* His return—wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, and famines—must take place, and He wanted them not to panic. “The end won’t follow immediately” (Mark 13:7). Why is this fact important for us today?

Anyone who uses war as a reason for claiming the end is near has forgotten what Jesus said: “That’s not the end.” Don’t go there. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Jesus warned His disciples in 13:9–13 that persecution would come. How might these verses encourage disciples suffering for their faith, including Mark’s first readers in Rome?

Now, it’s a good time to pause and say that the Christian life really never has been a short sprint. It’s not a 100-meter dash. It’s a marathon. It’s the long obedience in the same direction, year in, year out. Season in, season out. Stay faithful. Stay committed. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Look at the various interpretations of “the abomination of desolation” (Mark 13:14 NASB) in the article “[What Is the Abomination of Desolation?](#)” at gotquestions.org. What in Mark 13:24–27 confirms that Jesus was describing the tribulation and the second coming that will follow it? A helpful “[Timeline of Future Events](#)” bookmark is available for purchase at insight.org.

How does Jesus’ concluding exhortation “Stay alert!” (13:37 NASB) encourage all believers?

“Stay alert.” Don’t lose your sense of urgency. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Take Heed and Be Watchful

In Scripture, God warns His people to take heed and stay watchful. How does the message in our passage on the second coming of the Lord resemble [Zechariah 14:4](#) and [Revelation 1:7](#)?

How do [Matthew 24:24–39](#); [Acts 1:6–7](#); and [2 Thessalonians 2:1–12](#) confirm the truth that no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen? What should be our attitude toward anyone who claims to know such a date?

*Don’t follow people who say they know. Stop giving your money to them.
Stop buying their books. Stop listening to them. Turn them off.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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How do these passages on the rapture of the church encourage our hearts as believers—*John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52; and 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17*? What should be our behavior and attitude, knowing that it is already the hour for us to awaken from sleep (*Romans 13:11–14 and 1 John 3:1–3*)?

How good is that? “Comfort one another with these words.” I’m ready for it any day, any time. “May it happen now.” Stay awake! Don’t go to sleep! Learn from what you have just read that you are to stay away, stay awake, and stay alert. Because at any moment He will come. I will say that! That’s my prediction.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Stay Away! Stay Awake! Stay Alert!

We can maintain a healthy balance regarding the subject of prophecy by putting into practice three principles. First, *stay away from anyone who makes specific predictions*. How can you put up a barrier to block the sound waves of false prophets?

Anyone who has to recalculate his or her hard-and-fast prediction, that’s the day you need to turn that person off. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Second, *stay awake*. Don’t get lethargic and sleepy at a time when God’s people should be in touch with His plan. Think of some ways you can resist spiritual slumber.

You close your Bible, you’re going to get sleepy. It’s the most accurate predicting source of information you’ll find on the planet, but it takes work to think it through and to interpret it correctly. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Third, *stay alert*. What changes has the Holy Spirit moved you to make as you reflect on the importance of spiritual alertness?

What a great hope we have in the Lord's imminent return!
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What keeps us stable in uncertain times? It's the same bedrock of truth that has kept Christians steady throughout history: *the hope of Christ's return*. Fix your eyes on a future filled with the glory of our returning King, the One at whose name every knee will bow.



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word. Guide me into Your truth and away from error as I learn to follow the teachings of Jesus—accurately, clearly, daily, and practically. Help me stay away from false teachers, stay awake spiritually, and stay alert. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](https://www.insight.org/how-does-pastor-chuck-swindoll-study-the-bible)" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

For the 2027 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2011, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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