The Son of Man Comes with Great Power and Glory

Mark 13:1-37

Key Verse: 13:26 “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”

During the Japanese occupation of Korea in the early 20th century, the greetings of Christians in Korea was unique and meaningful, which was “The Lord will come soon.” This shows that the suffering Christians were eagerly waiting for the second coming of Jesus and the arrival of the kingdom of God. This also shows us where we must put our true hope on and who we should fix our eyes upon in times of suffering. The answer is the second coming of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. In today’s passage Jesus explains, 1) what will happen when he comes again, 2) how we have to prepare for and respond to his second coming, 3) and how and when he comes back.

First, the beginning of birth pains (1-13) **As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!**” (1) The disciple of Jesus must have been fascinated by the beauty and magnificence of the temple. We call this temple ‘Herod’s Temple’ which King Herod had rebuilt and extended at the site of Zerubbabel Temple. The historian Josephus describes the beauty of the temple as, “Whatever was not overlaid with gold was purest white.” Some of the white stones were 37 feet long, 12 feet high and 18 feet wide. How did Jesus answer him who was marveled by the temple? Look at verse 2. “***Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.***” Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple. His word was fulfilled in AD 70 when Titus, a Roman general, invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. At that time the stones were even pried apart so the Romans could collect the gold leaf that melted from the roof when the temple was set on fire.

**As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately.** “***Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled.***” (3-4) In Jesus’ day people believed that the end of the world would come when the temple is destroyed. The four disciples wanted to know the signs and date of the end of the age. They were curious about the future. How did Jesus answer them? Look at verse 5. “***Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you.***” Jesus warned them to watch out for several signs of the end times. The first one is the appearance of the false messiah. In verse 6 Jesus said, “***Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many***.” He said in v.21-23, “***At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.***” Even today there are many things and many Jesuses which deceive us. But we must remember that the Lord is one and that our Messiah is Christ Jesus alone. Amen. Paul warned in 2 Corinthians and Galatians against the false messiah. He said if anyone who preaches another Jesus and different gospel, let God curse on him. (2 Cor 11:4, Gal 1:8) We must teach only Jesus. We must teach Jesus’ death and resurrection together. No cross, no crown. Sufferings always follow us when we live in Jesus and for his name’s sake.

The second signs are wars and natural disasters. Look at verses 7-8. “***When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and the kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains***.” Wars and rumors of war have continued in human history. (But people worry that the war between Ukraine and Russia may become a trigger for World War III. Domestic gun violence in US has become much more frequent and crueler than any other generation. There is a historic drought in California now, and the recorded heat waves attacked the whole country this week.) But Jesus said that all these are birth pains. Birth pains are necessary for a new life in a pregnant woman. We are now suffering from people and nature like a pregnant woman who is struggling with birth pains for her new baby.

The third sign is persecutions against Christians. Jesus explains this in verses 9-13. “***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.***” (9) “***Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.***” (12) Why do people persecute Christians even from their family members? This is because of Jesus. Jesus said in verse 13. “***Everyone will hate you because of me.***” At that time all human relationships will be invalid, and a new relationship in Christ will start. Only those who are in Christ Jesus will become new family. These are the signs that will come.

Second, the gospel must first be preached to all nations. (14-23) What should we do at that time? Jesus teaches us several things we must do at the end of the age. The first one is to watch out. Jesus repeated his warning, ‘*watch out*’ in verse 5,9,18,23,33,35,37. Watch out means spiritually be awake. Spiritual sleeping means life without having fellowship with God. There are those who stop their spiritual lives, stop praying and reading the word of God, and instead hate their brothers and live only for their physical lives. To spiritually be awake, we must keep having fellowship with the Holy Spirit. (Gal 5:16) In the OT God let the high priests enter the holy places twice a day, every morning and evening, so that they might burn incense and keep lamps burning. By doing so God let them be always awake in the presence of God. (Ex 27:20-21, 30:7-8)

The second one is preaching the gospel to all nations. Let us read verse 10. “***And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.***” What must we do in the middle of natural disasters and various persecutions? Only despair and lose heart? No, we must preach the gospel as our first priority. The gospel is the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The more the world is troubled, the more people need the gospel. Personally last week my heart was heavy and troubled because of health issue in my family. I became anxious and the power of death arose in my heart. But while writing this message, Jesus rebuked me and helped me to do what I have to do first—preaching the gospel to all nations. We have many problems in and out. But the end does not come right away. We must put everything in God’s hand and go out to preach the good news to the perishing souls on campus. The third one is depending on the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 11. “***Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit***.” Satan’s best weapon is fear. Satan plants fear when we are tested and persecuted. Some say that they are anxious that they may deny Jesus when they are persecuted. But we don’t need to become anxious in advance because during those times the Holy Spirit will protect us and teach us what to say. We must pray that the Holy Spirit may be with us and fill us and guide us in all aspects of our lives, especially at the end time. Fourth, we must give up the things on this earth. Look at verses 14-16. “***When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.***” ‘The abomination that causes desolation’ is the prophecy of Daniel about defamation the temple by the pagans. (Da 9:27,11:31,12:11) This also implies the appearance of the detestable things by the Romans in AD 70 and by antichrists in the end time. At that time Christians must give up things of the world and turn to the Lord. We don’t need all these in the time of judgment. Remember Lot’s wife! She didn’t get anything from the city of Sodom. Rather, she turned back and became a pillar of salt. Fifth, we must stand firm. God’s judgment is dreadful and thorough. Jesus said in verse 17. “***How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!***” Jesus meant that pain and sorrow for mothers to see their children suffering is unbearable. But Jesus promised to shorten the days for the sake of Christians. In verse 20, “...***But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them***.” In the time of God’s judgment, we must stand firm. Let nothing move us. (1 Co 15:58) Be faithful to the point of death, then we will receive the crown of life. (Rev 2:10) Let us read verse 13 again. “***Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved***.” Amen.

Third, Jesus’ second coming (24-37) We call this in Greek, *Parousia*’ which means ‘second visit’. When Jesus came to this world the first time, he was born as a baby in a manger. No one knew his birth except a few people around him. But when he comes again, he will come as a judge between the living and the dead. Everyone will see his glorious coming. Look at verses 26-27. “***At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 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***.” The second coming of Jesus is the climax of human history. All human history is heading toward this moment. Time for all things on this earth is set on this moment. Therefore, our life purpose, schedule, and focus should be set on this moment. When Jesus came to this world the first time, he came to die for our sins. When he comes again, he will bring his people back to his kingdom. He will send his angels and gather his elected from every corner of the world. This is the day of glory for those who watch out all the time. This is the day of victory for those who stand firm to the end. Those who have *Parousia* faith will overcome the world. They live and walk by the Holy Spirit.

Let us read verses 30-31. “***Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away***.” In the book of Daniel God showed what would happen in the future through the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar (Da 2) and of Daniel (Da 7). In his dream the king saw a large statue which was made by gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay. (Da 2:31-33) These four parts indicate four kingdoms to come after the day of Daniel. As God showed the future of human history, God fulfilled his dream exactly. We are now living in era of the pre-millennium. God will fulfill all these signs of the end of age as Jesus predicted. Heaven and earth may pass away, but his promise will never pass away until even one word comes to be fulfilled. Amen!

But we don’t know when this day will come. Jesus said in verse 32. “***But about the day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father***.” Jesus continues, “***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. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.***” (34-35) How wonderful it will be if Jesus comes back when we worship God in church! What a blessed day it would be if Jesus comes when we are spiritually awake! But we don’t know when he will come back. Look at verse 36-37. “***If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!***” We don’t know whether we will meet Jesus after we die or before we die. Either way we must be alert and keep watch! Amen!