

最后的黑暗，带来最亮的黎明——马可福音 13:24-31

The Darkest Hour Brings the Brightest Dawn—Mark 13:24-31

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture Reading: Mark 13:24-31; 2 Peter 3:3-14

Mark 13:24-31 (NASB1995)

24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven. 28 “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. 30 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

- "The darkness before dawn". We often use this idiom to describe the most difficult hour right before the good days come. This phrase can well depict the end-time great tribulation prophesied in the Bible. By God's sovereign orchestration, the end-time great tribulation will be the darkest time in human history; yet, after this greatest darkness, God's people will be ushered into the brightest dawn. Today's Scripture will transport us from this darkest night to that brightest dawn.
- Background: The Olivet Discourse. The theme is the events of the end times. A large portion of this sermon focuses on the disasters as God judges the world for sin. Jesus specifically mentions "the abomination of desolation" (Mark 13:14), which corresponds to the seventieth “seven” of Daniel (Daniel 9:27), that is, the final seven years before the arrival of God's Kingdom. Jesus says the tribulation in those days will have no equal in the entire history of the world (Mark 13:19).
- But the tribulation itself is not the main focus. This tribulation is referred to as "birth pangs" (Mark 13:8), signifying that after the pain, the joy of new life will come. This new life to come is the Kingdom of God.
- 【Connection】 God often uses events that seem utterly terrible in human eyes to bring about extraordinarily good results. Jesus' crucifixion and the painful trials of Christians are examples of this. Oftentimes, God leads believers through valleys of life, and when we look back after emerging from those valleys, we can see the work of sanctification He accomplishes in us—making us know more of Christ and become more like Christ in our spiritual character. We couldn't have imagined such results until after the valley experience. This is how God works, not only in the lives of individual believers, but also on a cosmic scale. **He uses the great tribulation to deal with the sin in the world, just as He uses suffering to deal with the sin in believers. The end result is that we will see how pure and lovely it is for a life or even an entire kingdom to be completely free from sin!**
- Outline:

Title: The Darkest Hour Brings the Brightest Dawn—Mark 13:24-31

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2. The Brightest Dawn (vv. 26-27)
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The Darkest Hour (vv. 24-25)

- "In those days, after that tribulation": That is, after all the end-time tribulations mentioned above—natural disasters, international conflicts, religious deception, persecution of the faithful... After all of these catastrophic signs, the final phase of the seven-year great tribulation will unfold.
- "The sun... the moon... the stars... the powers that are in the heavens...": This will be a nightmare to astronomers, for God will break all the natural laws by which celestial bodies are governed. This is not an abstract spiritual metaphor, but a repeated prophecy in the Bible to be literally fulfilled.

Isaiah 13:9-10: “Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light.”

Isaiah 24:23: “Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, For the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And His glory will be before His elders.”

Ezekiel 32:7-8: “And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you and will set darkness on your land.”

Joel 3:15-16: “The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. The Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble.”

Amos 5:20: “Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?”

Amos 8:9: “It will come about in that day,” declares the Lord God, “That I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.”

Zephaniah 1:15: “A day of wrath is that day, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

Haggai 2:21-22: “I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations.”

Revelation 6:12-13: “I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.”

Revelation 8:12: “The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.”

Revelation 16:10: “Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened.”

【Consider】 On the basis of so many texts in Scripture, I trust you won't take Jesus' prophecy about the celestial changes as merely an abstract spiritual metaphor, right? Sadly, this is exactly how many modern biblical scholars interpret it.

The Brightest Dawn (vv. 26-27)

- “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory”: The darkest night suddenly blazes with light, as the Son of Man Himself appears in the sky. This is the moment when the end-time scene shifts from darkness to light. Imagine the overwhelming joy of the believers at that time.

Jesus' coming will be in "great power and glory," descending from heaven to earth. In the disciples' mind, however, when asking about His "coming" (Matthew 24:3), they only meant for Jesus to come quickly to His throne to reign as king, without going through the cross, death, resurrection, or ascension. They didn't know His coming would be from the sky! So they greatly underestimated the glory of Jesus' coming.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8; 2:8 "...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ... Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming."

Revelation 19:11-16 "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'"

- "He will... gather together His elect...": The purpose is for their protection. Those who have repented and come to faith in Christ during the tribulation will receive full protection around Jesus in the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-16; 19:11-21).

【Analogy】 God often withholds judgment until He has gathered His people for protection. **At the flood**, water did not come until Noah and his family were in the ark. **At Sodom and Gomorrah**, fire did not come from heaven until Lot and his family fled the city. **At the seven-year tribulation**, the waves of disasters will not begin to unfold until the church is raptured to meet the Lord in the air. Here, **at Armageddon**, God's wrath will not be poured out on the Antichrist and his armies until all the elect, who have repented and come to faith during the tribulation, are gathered safely to Jesus' side.

Luke 21:28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

The Surest Prediction (vv. 28-31)

- "Learn the parable from the fig tree": A simple parable that illustrates the brief and swift nature of the final end times.
- "when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door": When people see these end-time events beginning to unfold, they will know with certainty that Jesus' return is imminent. The word "you" here is trans-generational, not referring to the immediate audience of Jesus' time, but to those who get to see these events happening.
- "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place": What is "this generation"? Obviously, it refers to the generation that sees the beginning of the end-time events. How long is a generation? Some say 25 years, others say 40; either way, the entire tribulation is only seven years—much shorter than a full generation. So, among the generation that enters the tribulation, some will live to see the coming of Jesus. That's what this statement means.

【Discernment】 Be cautious of various errors that try to force today into "this generation." For example, some claim that Jesus' second coming is a spiritual coming, that He judged sin through the Romans and His spirit is now at work in the church, implying Jesus has already returned. But if Jesus' return were merely spiritual, what happened to our blessed eternal hope? What about the resurrection of the saints, reigning with Jesus, Satan being bound, sin being subdued, the curse of sin being reversed, lions eating grass with lambs, all of which clearly promised in the Bible? Where did all these second coming-related prophecies go? Therefore, accurate biblical interpretation is crucial. Don't be fooled into thinking that Jesus has already returned in some symbolic way.

- "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away": All of history is moving toward the final destiny God has ordained. This destiny includes the passing away of heaven and earth. Therefore, do not pursue anything that only exists in this passing universe!

2 Peter 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."

Conclusion and application

Is there anything that **lasts into eternity** and is truly **worth our effort to pursue**?

2 Peter 3:13 says, "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, **in which righteousness dwells.**"

Only the perfect righteousness of Jesus, and the souls counted righteous by God through Jesus, will enter the eternal new heavens and new earth. These souls are right beside you today. They are the only thing in your life that will enter eternity. Only the work of pursuing souls—to save the sinful souls and to build up the saintly souls, all by the Word of God—only such work has any eternal value!