

**“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away. He leaves his house in charge of his servants, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.**

**“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back – whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”** (Mark 13:32-37)

Think how you feel, when you stand in the Lincoln Memorial and read the Gettysburg Address and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural and then walk out on the steps and look east to the Washington Monument and Capitol Hill. Think about how you feel, when you leave the Lincoln Memorial and turn west to walk across Robert E. Lee’s old homestead, now Arlington National Cemetery with its Tomb of the Unknowns and JFK’s eternal flame. He is an impoverished soul, who doesn’t choke back emotion as symbols of our nation stir memory and infuse his heart with pride.

Those emotions build a bridge for us into the heart and soul of Jews in Jesus’ day. They saw the Jerusalem temple gleaming in a Middle Eastern sun and remembered their long and glorious history that came into focus in that temple, which was the center of the universe, because their God, the living and true God, lived there; and to that temple mount someday **many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths” ... Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.** (Isaiah 2:3-4)

### **The Passing of an Era**

Jesus rode into that Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and made straight for that temple. He did the unthinkable there. **He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.** (Mark 11:15-16) In the white heat of prophetic passion He declared: **“My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. But you have made it a den of robbers.”** (Mark 11:17)

The throngs in Jerusalem for Passover loved Him for it. The religious leaders hated Him for it. The passions of the “madding crowd” blocked the leaders from doing violence to His person. So, they tried time and again in public ways to discredit Him in the fickle eye of public opinion. Every time the opposite happened. He walked unscathed among dragons until He walked out of the temple.

His disciples walked out with Him and didn’t know what to say, so they changed the subject. One man pointed to the temple complex said, **“Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”** (Mark 13:1) The Lord’s reply stopped them in their tracks. **“Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”** (Mark 13:2)

The disciples wanted to know when Jesus thought these things would happen, and **“What will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”** (Mark 13:4) Jesus did not disappoint. What He said about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple fits the fall of many nations into chaos and ruin. It was to be a time of deception, violence, fear, flight, and the unaccountable advance of the gospel throughout the world.

## The Big Day

Then Jesus pointed His disciples beyond the coming national disaster. They were to see with the eye of faith a new world order emerge from the ashes of the old order. Jesus said: **“But in those days, following that distress, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ At that time men 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.”** (Mark 13:24-27)

It was Jesus’s visionary sketch of the day, when **the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.** (Revelation 11:15) It would be hard for the disciples to hold on to that vision when the Jerusalem temple lay in ruins, as it was to lie in ruins some 40 years later. So, Jesus spoke to their faith and ours, when He said: **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”** (Mark 13:31)

The disciples did ask Jesus one question He never answered. **“Tell us, when will these things happen?”** (Mark 13:4) He gave them signs to look for; He never put a date on the calendar. And neither should we. The Gospel of Mark could not be clearer: **“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”** (Mark 13:32) Five times we hear what to do: **Be on guard! Be alert!** (Mark 13:33) **Keep watch!** (Mark 13:35) **Don’t let him find you sleeping.** (Mark 13:36) **Watch!** (Mark 13:37)

Jesus said over and over, **“The time has come. The kingdom of God is near.”** (Mark 1:15) In other words, watch Jesus, and you will see what God’s authority looks like in human life. Watch Jesus, and you will God’s priorities on display. As the disciples learned that day in the temple, His authority will contradict human authority, and His priorities will contradict our priorities.

Unlikely disciples become extravagant disciples as they allow themselves to be corrected by the Lord they follow. They learn sooner or later that His thoughts are not their thoughts, and His ways are not their ways. They learn sooner or later that they are doing Him no favors by following Him. He is pouring out the new wine of heaven. It remains to be seen, if disciples then and disciples now are wineskins that can stretch and not split under the pressure of His expanding presence in their experience.

## Communion

The One who foretold the fall of Jerusalem is here with us by means of bread and cup and Gospel. We hold in our hands the visible representations of Him who said to them and says to us, “Watch me, and you will see what God is like. God is with you. Don’t miss Him!”

We won’t miss Him, if we keep in step with the Holy Spirit. We keep in step with the Spirit, when we watch for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. There are many ways to watch. Let’s talk about one. The Apostle Paul told Christian slaves to do what their slave-owning masters told them to do **not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.** (Ephesians 6:6) Their responsibilities as slaves was God’s will for them at that place and time. Do you think of your daily responsibilities as God’s will for you? Doing them well to please Christ is the best way you can watch for the Second Coming? As you hold the bread and cup in your

hand this morning and commune with Christ, ask Him for strength to do your daily work with all your heart as the will of God for your life. Make your promises to Him.