

Title: Wakey, Wakey

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, enter our hearts and minds as we prepare for the day of the coming of your son; let your Holy Spirit continue to live and move with us, guiding us, and showing us your path of salvation, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

While on a South Pole expedition, British explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton left a few men on Elephant Island, promising that he would return. Later, when he tried to go back, huge icebergs blocked the way.

But suddenly, as if by a miracle, an avenue opened in the ice and Shackleton was able to get through. His men, ready and waiting, quickly scrambled aboard. No sooner had the ship cleared the island than the ice crashed together behind them.

Contemplating their narrow escape, the explorer said to his men, "It was fortunate you were all packed and ready to go!" They replied, "We never gave up hope. Whenever the sea was clear of ice, we rolled up our sleeping bags and reminded each other, 'He may come today.'"

That's the overall theme of Advent, preparedness. Jesus implores us to be alert. Shackleton's men also had hope. It was their hope that propelled their preparedness. Without hope, they would not bother to roll up their sleeping bags. Their preparedness allowed them to quickly board the ship before the ice closed in on them again.

The men on Elephant Island had to also stay awake, or least one needed to be awake. Otherwise if the ship came at night, they would not be ready to board. They knew not when the ship would arrive. Yet they knew that their deliverance was at hand.

Jesus' message to the disciples was the same in chapter 13 of Mark. When all things look dire, even in the midst of suffering, a savior will come and set things right. Jesus described the destruction of the temple, which resulted in a crisis for Jews and Christians.

Of course, the temple was torn down just as Jesus said it would be. The Romans did this in the year 70. With the temple gone, God no longer had a home on earth. The relationship we have with God would change forever.

Jesus continued to outline a litany of catastrophe and woe. Jesus also said that there would be false prophets and some who will claim to be the messiah. Jesus said, “Don’t listen to them.”

After the period of false prophets and false messiahs, the sun will be darkened and the moon will give no light. Jesus describes an eclipse. Then the Son of Man will come in power and glory. Angels will gather all the elect from everywhere in the world. Presumably, the elect are Christians though he could be referring to the disciples.

The scene is similar to what happened in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus’ death. At noon, darkness covered the whole land for three hours. Jesus then returned on the third day after the crucifixion. The scattered disciples were then to gather in Galilee where they would rejoin Jesus.

Jesus next returns to the fig tree. Of course, the fig tree is not alone in leafing out in the spring. But just as trees signal the coming summer, so too will Jesus’ signs point to the nearness of the Son of Man. When Passover comes, it is spring and summer is near. It was at that time of year Jesus was crucified. Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem’s gates.

Jesus then says that all this will happen before their generation is gone. If this is true, the Son of Man came nearly 2,000 years ago.

Heaven and earth are finite, but Jesus’ words are infinite. Jesus says that his words will outlast the universe. Jesus’ disciples wrote down Jesus’ words for future generations. They are still around today. The Word of God is eternal. Just as physicists do not know what there was before the universe, we cannot conceive of anything before God, who was before the universe.

Jesus reiterates that the timing for all of this is unknown. Because we do not know when this will happen, we are cautioned to stay alert.

When Jesus refers to the Son of Man, he is quoting directly from Daniel 7:13. So what did Daniel mean when he said the Son of Man would come?

Most of Daniel is apocalyptic literature. It was written to give hope to Jews under Greek rule. As is true of much apocalyptic literature, the setting is in the past even though it is really referring to the present. In Daniel, the Son of Man is someone who will set the world straight under the direct command of God.

Jesus makes a metaphor about the coming of the Son of man comparing it to a man who went on a journey, leaving his slaves in charge. The work of the slaves was to continue as if the man was still at the home. The man commands the doorkeeper to keep watch. The ancient rich did not have doorbells. A doorkeeper determined who may enter and who may not enter a rich person's home.

The doorkeeper is to make sure that when the man returns, he will be given entry. If the doorkeeper is asleep when the man returns, the man would likely be angry that he cannot enter his own home. Obviously, one person cannot stay awake 24 hours a day, every day. The doorkeeper would have to delegate the job to others. But if another slave was not alert, woe to the doorkeeper. The doorkeeper, the other slaves, and everyone need to keep awake.

The study of the end times is called eschatology. There are many views and theories of eschatology. The Bible is not clear about the circumstances of the end times. One of those views is that human death and despair ended when Jesus died. The post-resurrection world that we live in now is the new life that Jesus promised. That can be justified from Mark's gospel and chapter 13.

I wish to end with Psalm 57:7–11, “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody. Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn. I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens; your faithfulness extends to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth.”

Text: **Mark 13:24–37** (NRSV)

²⁴“But in those days, after that suffering,
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 in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶ Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.

²⁷ Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he^e is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert;^f for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

³⁵ Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

^c Or *it*#

^f Other ancient authorities add *and pray*

¹ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). (Mk 13:24–37). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.