

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)
Mark 13:24-29

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. Today, we'll be reading Mark 13, verses 24 to 29.

Peter greatly valued prophecy and was himself well acquainted with the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets, especially those concerning Christ's return. In 2 Peter 1:19-21 of the New King James Version, he says: "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Since prophecy is the word of God, it's essential to understand that interpreting prophecy also requires divine guidance. Today is no different; these prophetic words are God's confirmed utterances, shining like a lamp in a dark place. For we live in a dark and evil age, and prophecy serves as the lamp of this age, bringing light and hope. When we are illuminated by this light, we have hope, as if a day has dawned within us, and the morning star, representing our hope, appears in our hearts.

In the Bible, there are numerous prophecies. Some speak to specific events, and when these events unfold, you see the lamp shining in the darkness, and the morning star rising in your heart, confirming the fulfillment of that prophecy. However, there is another kind of prophecy in the Bible that transcends epochs. It unveils the progression of human history through prophecy. Among these prophecies, one of the most significant is found in Daniel 9:24-27, known as the prophecy of the seventy sevens. Many theologians regard this prophecy as the backbone of all prophecies. It divides crucial milestones in human history into seventy sets of seven years, and the fulfillment of the first sixty-nine sets of seven years has already come to pass.

At that time, when Jesus stood with His twelve disciples on the Mount of Olives, facing the Temple in Jerusalem, He was on the brink of encountering the end of the sixty-nine sets of seven years, as prophesied in Daniel 9:26, which says, "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." Here, the "Messiah" undoubtedly refers to Jesus Christ. After Jesus Christ was crucified, the fulfillment of the first sixty-nine sets of seven years had already occurred.

And next: "The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood." And the fulfillment of this saying was in the year 70 AD, when the Roman prince Titus led the Roman armies, attacking into Jerusalem, destroying the city of Jerusalem and the temple. And there will be war until the end, desolations are determined. The Jewish people were cast among all the nations, until the very end of the world. How much time would pass in between, this prophecy does not tell us, that is between the first sixty-nine weeks and the last single week, in between there is a very long interim period, this interim period is called the Church Age, or called the Age of Grace.

This is what the Old Testament prophets could not see, because the church was a mystery to them. The mystery of the church was specially revealed to the New Testament apostles, especially Paul. However, in the last seven years of this age, it is included in the seventy weeks of Daniel, and verse 27 says: "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week, He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." This refers to the last seven years of the end of this age, when Israel will sign a covenant, which is a peace treaty. Next it says, "And in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." The one who signs the covenant with Israel is the Antichrist. That covenant will bring three and a half years of peace, which is half of the week. After that, he will reveal his true identity and bring about the end of the world. That is three and a half years or forty-two months of great tribulation.

The events that will occur during the great tribulation period have already been broadly mentioned in yesterday's scripture, and the details are all in the Book of Revelation. After the end of the great tribulation, it will be the second coming of

Jesus Christ. The clearest prophecy about the second coming of Jesus Christ is found in the Book of Zechariah.

Verse 24-25: "But in those days, after that tribulation, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.'"

In Mark, before mentioning the great tribulation, in verse 24, it speaks of some extraordinary changes in celestial phenomena to occur "after that tribulation": "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken." Here, Mark is referencing Zechariah 14:3-7, which speaks of the day of the Lord, when the nations rise up against Israel, in Israel's most dire hour of need.

Zechariah 14:3 says: "Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east." This passage describes Jesus returning when Israel is unable to save itself, just before its destruction. His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. "Thus, the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south." Jesus returns to rescue the people of Israel, and the Mount of Olives splits into two, creating a vast valley where they can escape. In verse 5, it says: "Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus, the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You." This verse depicts Jesus returning with all the saints. Verse 6 states: "It shall come to pass in that day That there will be no light; The lights will diminish." It describes a day known only to the Lord, not day or night as we know it, but in the evening, there will be light.

Verse 26: "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." (Matthew 24:30 refers to "all the tribes of the earth")

In Zechariah 12:10, it says, "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced." After the great tribulation, at Israel's most desperate time, Jesus will return to rescue the Israelites. At that time there will be various changes in the heavenly bodies, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord." (Joel 2:31) At that time "they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30)

Verse 27: "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven."

Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives facing these four disciples, describing the end of the world, the great tribulation, and the scene of His second coming. On the one hand, His heart was truly filled with sorrow. Jerusalem was the city of the great King; it was His city. The temple was His house. He knew that in another forty years, this temple would become desolate, and Israel would be tossed about among the nations. The people of Israel would be scattered, dwelling in every corner of the world, suffering persecution. For the people of Israel were a stiff-necked people, they did not obey. Therefore, Jesus took this opportunity to explain to His disciples the things that were going to happen in the future.

The same event is recorded in the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but from different perspectives. Because the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as the coming King, it records His second coming most completely, including chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew. And it describes the scene of His return from three perspectives: the Jewish people, the church, and the Gentiles.

Mark's account is the simplest. It seems he only records the part about the Jewish people, if you compare it with the Gospel of Matthew. It seems that Mark does not seem to intentionally distinguish the Jewish people and the church so clearly. Because Mark records that Jesus is a servant who came to serve His people, to serve His church, like a servant. A servant is always watchful and waiting, so the Gospel

of Mark especially emphasizes that whether Jewish or New Testament saints, all must stay watchful, waiting and praying.

The same account is recorded in Luke 21, because Luke emphasizes that Jesus is a gentle, tender and perfect man. Therefore, he separates the first fulfillment in 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed, from the time when the great tribulation of the end of the world comes, making these two parts more distinct. Especially for the part about the destruction of Jerusalem, he dwells on that more.

Let's return to the Gospel of Mark. Although Jesus was describing this to His disciples in an extremely sorrowful state of mind, even though the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed, even though there would be a great tribulation, He emphasized that the Son of Man would come again. And when the Son of Man comes on the clouds with great power and glory, He will send out His angels and gather His elect from the four corners, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. In other words, God is faithful, God does not forget the covenant He made with His people - when He returns, He will accomplish salvation. And at that time, His people will recognize that the one they pierced is the Messiah who will come to save them. Therefore, the remnant of His people will all repent and be saved. After saying all this, Jesus then went on to tell them when exactly these things would happen.

Verse 28: "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near."

Remember in chapter 11 verses 12-13, when they came out from Bethany and were going into the temple, along the way they saw a fig tree with leaves but no fruit. So Jesus cursed that tree saying, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." As a result, the next day that tree had withered away. We said that the fig tree represents the nation of Israel. The people of Israel were God's chosen people, but they did not bear fruit, so God allowed them to wither away.

But here in verse 28, Jesus says, "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch becomes tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near." In other words, Jesus was telling them that one day Israel would be re-established as a nation. This verse, until after Israel was re-established as a nation in 1948, made all the biblical commentators suddenly realize that Jesus had planted a seed here. When Israel was re-established, it was like the fig tree becoming tender and putting forth leaves. In human history, there has never been a nation that was destroyed for over a thousand years and was then able to re-establish itself in its original land. Therefore, no one thought this verse was about the re-establishment of Israel for a long time.

During the Reformation era about five hundred years ago, no one would have thought Israel could possibly be re-established as a nation, so most biblical commentators thought that Israel was like that fig tree, that once Jesus cursed it, it withered away forever. Therefore, the re-establishment of Israel in 1948 was a major event, especially for biblical scholars interested in New Testament prophecy, causing them all to re-examine the issue of Israel. Currently, most, especially dispensationalist, biblical commentators agree that this verse is referring to the re-establishment of Israel. In other words, when Israel was re-established, when the fig tree put forth branches, you know that summer is near.

Verse 29: "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!"

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! Nearly two thousand years ago, when You were on the Mount of Olives and spoke Your prophecies, You already told us that one day You would come again. Not only will You come again, You also told us roughly when that time will be. Thank You for placing us at the end of the age of grace. When we see the world situation slowly being fulfilled according to Your previous prophecies, Lord, please help us to recognize that the day of Your return is near. Also help us to be watchful and prepared Christians, so that when You return, we may receive Your praise. Lord, help me to live my life today that may be counted worthy before You. Thank You! I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.