

People of God we are at the end of our examination of the Olivet Discourse in Mark 13, and we have seen thus far that the Lord Jesus has been answering his disciples' questions about when the temple is going to be destroyed and what the signs were going to be to signify when it is about to be accomplished. Jesus spoke about the signs which would happen throughout the Empire, he spoke about the signs that would happen directly to the apostles, and he spoke about the signs that would happen in Jerusalem.

Jesus, in verse 24, refers back to all those events and calls it the tribulation. *"But in those days after that tribulation."* The Apostle John in the book of Revelation also refers to this period of time as the Tribulation. *"I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom, and the endurance of the saints, was on the island called Patmos."*

So Jesus refers to that time as "the tribulation," and he proceeds to tell us what is going to happen after that tribulation. He says, *"the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars from heaven will be falling from Heaven, and the powers of the Heaven will be shaken."*

The sun, moon, stars, and the powers of heaven that Jesus speaks of here does not refer to the physical sun, moon, and stars, and outer space. We know that whatever is happening here, it cannot refer to the end of the physical universe, for Jesus already told us that these things are the beginning of birth pains. We know that the physical material universe did not come to an end in 70 AD. So the sun, moon, stars must be understood to be symbols which represent something else, and these heavenly lights going out, signify something else.

Isa. 13:9-10 says

*"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."*

This was a prophecy concerning God's judgment on the nation of Babylon using the Empire of the Medes to conquer them.

Ezek. 32:7-8 says

*"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 shall not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you and will set darkness on your land."*

This event was referring to Egypt being conquered by Babylon, for it says in verse 11, *"The sword of the king of Babylon will come upon you."*

There are plenty of other examples of this kind of language in the Bible in which God sends an earthly nation to judge and overthrow another earthly nation, and the prophets describe it in cosmic imagery. These nations get their "lights knocked out," so to say. And Jesus is utilizing this same kind of language to describe what is about to happen to Jerusalem and Israel.

This is figurative and symbolic language. Now the question we may ask ourselves is, what does the sun, moon, and stars, and heaven have to do with earthly nations and rulers? Why does God choose to represent earthly nations and rulers with astronomical and heavenly symbols?

Well, first of all, the sun, moon, and stars are said in Genesis 1 to rule the day and the night. Also remember that the Heavens are an archetype for the Earth. So when we see earthly rulers in the Bible, we should likewise expect them to be referred to in terms of these heavenly rulers of sun, moon, and stars.

And this is exactly what we see. In Gen. 37, for example, Joseph dreamed that the Sun, moon, and 11 stars, or constellations, were bowing down to him. And his father, being a good biblical theologian, said, *"What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I, your mother, and your brothers come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?"*

In Judges 5 Deborah and Barak sung these words, celebrating the victory over Sisera and his army.

*The kings came, they fought,  
then fought the kings of Canaan;  
at Taanach, by the rivers of Megiddo;  
they gave no spoils of silver.  
From Heaven the stars fought,  
from their courses they fought against Sisera.*

So what we see is that stars are symbols of earthly rulers and governments and armies in Scripture. The physical stars themselves were not fighting in the heavens. However, their earthly counterparts were fighting on Earth, and if we could speak in Biblical symbolism, we would describe the event in its heavenly arena, and we would say the stars fought.

And, we still do this today. The United States of America is represented by 50 stars. Japan is represented by the Sun. Many Islamic countries have the crescent moon on their flag. Sun, moon, stars, still to this day represent the political structure and order of nations and their rulers and their political systems.

Now that is one level of interpretation. There is another level of interpretation which tells us that the stars in heaven also represent and symbolize angelic rulers. So that if we were to see behind the scenes in Heaven during the battle against Sisera, when the song says “the stars fighting in the heavens”, we would see that the angels, or the gods, as pagans understood them to be, the angels who had spiritual jurisdiction over those tribes were fighting each other, they were warring in the heavens. And whichever angel or god won in heavens, that earthly army or king would win on earth.

So we have the multi-layered symbolic structure of the cosmos that the Bible presents to us. Sun, moon, and stars in the middle, and they represent Earthly rulers below, and Heavenly rulers above.

So, when Jesus uses this prophetic and highly symbolic and multilayered language we need to understand what in the world, and what in the heavens, is going on. Yes, on one level, Jesus is describing the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the overthrow and destruction of the Jewish covenantal order, by the Roman Army, and it is described in cosmic Heavenly terms as the lights of the sun, moon, and stars going out.

The powers in the heavens being shaken refers to both the earthly rulers below, and the angelic rulers and mediators over Israel which governed her from above. The whole thing, earthly and angelic, came crashing down with the destruction of the temple.

So, this cosmic view with all these interconnecting symbols and earthly and heavenly realities of angels and kings and covenantal administrations, is known in the Bible as “Heaven and Earth.” The Heaven and Earth which Christ says will pass away is not the physical Heaven and Earth, but the Covenantal Administration that God has established to rule over the ancient world.

That includes Israel as His priestly nation, the High Priesthood, the Levitical Priests, the sacrificial system and all feasts and ceremonial aspects of life and religion that God established for Israel. All that God prescribed for Israel that pertained to them being the Covenant People of God in the world and them being the primary means through which God communicated His saving presence to the world, was going to be overthrown and pass away.

But included in that is also the administration and rule of the Angels as the Mediators of that Old Covenant. The Sun, moon, and stars represented angelic hosts that made up the spiritual powers behind the

scenes in Heaven, which the earthly powers received their power and authority from.

All of that was overturned. So Jesus is talking about the end of the Old Covenant, the end of the Old Creation, the end of the Old Heaven and Earth, with all its earthly and angelic rulers and covenantal authorities and symbolic structures typified in the Temple.

It is coming to an end, and Jesus Christ is taking his place on the throne of God as the New Mediator of the New Creation, of the New Covenant, and of the New Heaven and Earth and the King and High Priest of the New Jerusalem.

It is this exaltation above the angelic order of the Old Creation that Paul refers to when he says that God raised “*Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.*” This is what Paul referred to when He said *that there is only one mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus*. All those angelic mediators no longer have authority in the Heavens. The highest ranking authority in the Heavenly and Spiritual and Earthly realm belongs to a Man, the Man Christ Jesus.

Now, as the ruler of the Heaven and Earth, with all authority and power and dominion, being exalted above the angels, and above every earthly king or ruler, his rule, being equal with God, Jesus Christ now orchestrates the events of history, and the first thing he is going to do to prove it is so, is bring down the Old Covenantal order, by sending His angel armies to war against the evil hosts of heaven, which is manifested on earth as Roman armies coming to destroy Jerusalem and the temple.

But why does Christ talk about all this as coming on the clouds? First, the Bible often describes God in His glory and power as being covered with clouds. This is described in Exodus in a number of places, most famously when God comes down on Mt. Sinai to give the law, and to give His covenant to ancient Israel, which was mediated also by angels.

Paul makes reference to this in Galatians 3:19 when he says that the law was put in place through angels (Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:53; Hebb 2:2). Also when Moses saw the glory of God in Ex. 34, and there it says God came down in a cloud and stood with him. God's presence, when he comes down to the earth, is seen in the clouds.

But then we also have verses which specifically describe God's judgment as coming on the clouds. Isa. 19:1, "*Behold the Lord is riding on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt.*" And Jer. 4:13,16 – "*Behold, he comes up like clouds his chariots like whirlwinds; his horses are swifter than eagles – woe to us we are ruined.*" 16 – "*Warn the nations he is coming; announce to Jerusalem, 'Besiegers come from a distant land.'*"

So the Son of Man coming on the clouds with power and great glory is the scriptural way of saying that Jesus Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God where he has received all authority to rule over the nations, he is the Mediator of the New Covenant Administration, and, you will see his power over the Nations on Earth and the powers in the Heavens, when he comes in the clouds in judgment on Jerusalem, by sending besiegers from a distant land, the Romans, which also indicates that he has overthrown the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of this world, which is the devil, and all his angels.

Interestingly, Roman Historians Josephus, Tacitus, and others, all said that during the siege of Jerusalem in 66 AD people actually saw angelic armies surrounding the cities in the clouds. Josephus said:

*[O]n the twenty-first day of the month of Artemisius [Jyar], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities.*

*Tacitus also mentions this event: "In the sky appeared a vision of armies in conflict, of glittering armour."<sup>2</sup> Pseudo-Hegesippus also describes the coming of Christ on the clouds with His mighty angels at that time when he writes, "A certain figure appeared of tremendous size, which many saw, just as the books of the Jews have disclosed, and before the setting of the sun there were suddenly seen in the clouds chariots in the clouds and armed battle arrays by which the cities of all Iudaea and its territories were invaded."<sup>3</sup>*

*Even The medieval Jewish historian Sepher Yosippon expounds upon this angelic army in the sky of A.D. 66 by saying, "Moreover, in those days were seen chariots of fire and horsemen, a great force flying across the sky near to the ground coming against Jerusalem and all the land of Judah, all of them horses of fire and riders of fire."<sup>1</sup>*

And this also gives us insight as to why angels in the book of Revelation are the ones administering the judgment of God upon Jerusalem. Because those angelic mediators who mediated the Old Covenant to Israel, are the ones who are also bringing the final judgment upon that covenantal administration as well, with Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, leading the forces of heaven against the Jews.

I think all of this and probably more is what is indicated when Christ speaks of the sun, moon, and stars and the powers of the heavens being

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.revelationrevolution.org/jesus-the-son-of-man-was-seen-in-the-clouds-in-a-d-66/>

shaken and the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with great power and glory.

Then Christ says, *“Then he (the Son of Man) will send out his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth, to the ends of heaven.”*

Who are these angels Jesus speaks of? I do not think these are the heavenly angels I have just been speaking of. We know that the word translated as angel in biblical Greek is also the common word used for “messenger.” God’s prophets, ministers, and messengers, both in the OT and the New, are described as Angels. God’s angels are his divine messengers, and in the Greek translation of the OT, *angelos* is the word used for prophets. And the pastors of the churches in Revelation are likewise referred to as angels in the 7 letters.

So I do not think that the angels here refers to the heavenly beings, since Jesus specifically describes the heavenly angels in verse 32 as *“the angels in heaven.”* Rather, the angels Jesus refers to that he will send out to gather the elect are God’s gospel messengers – humans. Thus, after the tribulation of those days, after Christ comes on the clouds with power and great glory against Jerusalem with His Holy Angels and the Army of Rome and brings an end to that Heaven and Earth covenantal order, Christ will send forth his Gospel messengers, his Human Angels, to take the gospel message out to the world to gather the elect from the four winds.

The four winds is another way the Bible talks about the whole world. Scripture also uses the expression, the four corners of the earth. Jesus will send out his messengers to gather the elect from over the whole world, to the ends of the earth to bring them into His eternal Kingdom through preaching of the Gospel.

Jesus then gives an illustration of the fig tree, when it puts forth its leaves, you know summer is here. And when you see all these things take place that he has just been telling us through the whole Olivet discourse, then we too will also know that He is near, at the very gates.

Then he says, "*Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*" This could be a way of saying that his prophecy is so certain that Heaven and Earth would pass away before His word is ever proven false. While I think that is true per se, I think Jesus is actually telling us that His words are forever applicable even after the temple is destroyed and the Old Heaven and Earth passes away. His words will never pass away.

The truth is that He is the Son of Man ruling over the all things, and that his dealings with Israel will serve as the type for the rest of history. What happens to Israel does not end with Israel. Christ's words of power and rule and authority and dominion will not pass away just because the one nation that he happens to be specifically talking about in this instance will pass away. No.

All nations and all peoples are to heed the words of the Son of Man from this forth and forevermore. His words are forever applicable and binding and authoritative for all peoples everywhere, for the rest of time, lest we likewise find ourselves destroyed like Jerusalem. Therefore let us kiss the Son and take refuge in Him, and heed the word of His Gospel Messengers.

Now here is why I don't think that is a crazy stretch of interpretation. Because in the next section, after he is no one knows the day or hour of his coming, therefore everyone is to stay awake and be on their guard, he concludes by saying this: *And what I say to you, I say to all: Stay Awake.*

The Lord Jesus Christ's words are forever applicable and authoritative and should be heeded with such zeal and awareness, and the signs of the times need to be watched with such diligence that all generations, not just

that generation that passed away in 70 AD, not just the old Heaven and Earth, but even this generation we live in, and this time frame and era we live in during the Gospel Age of the New Creation, these things apply to us. In fact, they are meant specifically for us. He tells us the same thing as he told them. Stay Awake.

The Apostle Paul understood this principle, that whatever the Scriptures have to say, it was actually given to us, as in, to you, the people of the New Covenant and New Creation. He says in Romans 15, *“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.”*

And again he writes in 1 Cor. 10, after telling the story of the generation of Israelites in the wilderness that they ought to not grumble and be destroyed by serpents, and not commit sexual immorality as some of them did – he says, *“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom he ends of the ages has come.”*

Now I know we are talking about the passing away of the Old Covenant, and the end of that Age, and so we might be tempted to think that Paul is referring to that when he say the ends of the ages. However, the word “end” here is a form of the word telos, meaning purpose, or consummation, or goal.

The goal of all of history, People of God, is to bring about this age, the Gospel Age in which we live, believe it or not. To bring about the age of the reign of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. This is why the church saw fit to designate time according to Christ. This is truly the Year of our Lord. This time of the New Covenant, and the New Creation, in which we live right now. It is the goal toward which God was aiming all through the old covenant.

So that makes all this prophecy very, very exciting for us. Even though the historical details about what Jesus was talking about already happened,

the principles of His word shall never pass away, for even these things were written down for our instruction and encouragement, for us, upon whom the goal of history, the telos of the ages has come.

So, what does this all mean for us? It means that we are to stay awake people of God. Christ's words will never pass away. His authority and power and dominion as the Son of Man will manifest itself time and again throughout history, upon every tribe, language, people, and nation, even ours. And he manifest his Lordship when he comes on the clouds with power and great might to move history in the direction he sees fit.

Do you feel that history right now is being orchestrated and taken in a direction that seem foreign and strange to you. DO you feel like things are so far outside of your control right now. Yes, that is because Jesus Christ is ruling over the earth from Heaven.

And although you may be upset about a great many things going on the world and in our nation, you need to take refuge in Christ and believe in Him and let him be the source of your joy. He is orchestrating all the events of history for your salvation and glory.

So, if Christ then comes to judge our nation by sending China to destroy us, it is because we, like the ancient people of old, have forsaken the covenant of our God, and he is judging us. So stay awake. Take refuge in the Son, believe the gospel of His kingdom, and when He comes to knock our lights out, we will not be found walking in the darkness. We will be found looking to Sun of Righteousness and walking in the Light of His glory. We will be found to have a faith that goes beyond this nation, and we will find our citizenship in Heaven, where Christ the Lord of History reigns over Heaven and Earth. And as so long as we find our joy and faith confidence and keep our eyes fixed on Him, we will be OK.

May God grant us such faith to stay awake and to be on our guard as we await the Son of Man to come on the clouds of His glory and power, and

may we be found to be His elect people, who believe the Gospel message, and thus be saved from this crooked and perverse generation. Amen.