

THE SON OF MAN COMING WITH GREAT POWER AND GLORY

Mark 13:1-37

Key Verse: 13:26

“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”

Good morning! In case you don't know me, my name is James Kim. Pastor Ron went to Korea for an important meeting and he asked me to deliver the message. First of all, before the message I would like to share with you my personal story, a journey of faith. I grew up in a Christian family and faithfully attended Sunday worship service with my parents. But in my high school days I became very restless because I was not happy with all the church programs. The main focus of the church at that time was just to sit down and listen to the pastor's sermon and then to enjoy human fellowship. I was not happy with my so-called "Sunday Christian" life. Then I went to college. In 1967 during my sophomore year of medical school, I first came to UBF. (I was 20 years old. I was very young.) I was invited to Mother Sarah Barry's English Bible class early in the morning right before school started. At that time Mother Barry was about 37 years old, a beautiful American lady, a princess from Mississippi. She was very powerful in Bible teaching. She taught an inductive Bible study that was a very new thing to me. Through her Bible teaching I realized that I did not know the Bible nor did I know Jesus personally.

Through Bible study I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior and Lord. At that time it was the pioneering stage of Seoul. Dr. Lee and Mother Barry came from Kwangju and began the ministry in front of SNU campus. The center was a very dark, small rented room on the second floor. It was like a manger; but many students came for Bible study. M Joseph Ahn, Maria Ahn, Mark Yang were there when I first came to UBF. I was attracted to the deep Bible study as well as the mission and vision of Bible Korea and world mission. There I found the meaning and purpose of my life. My family was very poor at that time. In fact, the whole country was very poor after the devastating Korean War. The per capita income of South Korea was only \$70 (\$6 per month! You cannot buy much with \$6 a month except rice and kimchi.). The per capita income of Korea was lower than some African countries and most of the Asian countries like the Philippines and Thailand at that time.

When I came to UBF, Dr. Lee and Mother Barry loved me very much (At least I felt that way like Apostle John). Dr. Lee appointed me as Genesis one Bible

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speaker during the Genesis Bible school. One day Dr. Lee and Mother Barry took me to a 'roast chicken house' (Tongdak) that was newly opened in the neighborhood. Boy it was so delicious! I had never tasted such delicious roast chicken before in my whole life. Since then I decided to dedicate my whole life to UBF. In 1975, I came to Chicago as a lay missionary. I was 28 years old. In 1977 Mother Barry and Dr. Lee also came to Chicago for world campus mission. Dr. Lee was a father like shepherd and a charismatic leader. He dedicated his life in Chicago for 25 years to lay the foundation for American campus mission. When he passed away in 2002, we suddenly lost our direction without our leader and spiritual father. For the last 10 years, we needed to figure out a new direction without him telling us what to do.

Recently I read a book written by our second gen, Rebekah Kim. She is a Sociology professor in Pepperdine University in California. She wrote a book called, "The Spirit Moves West." Based on her research and many interviews with UBF members she wrote about Korean missionaries' work in America. In her book she said UBF has gradually evolved from the hyper-evangelical Korean church to become more like an American church: more relaxed, casual and easy-going. This may be a fair statement for better or for worse depending on whom you are talking to.

These days I am restless again with two questions in my mind, "What is worship?" and, "What is the purpose of worship?" To me the first and foremost important thing should be encountering God. A Scottish theologian William Barclay summarized the definition of worship very well. He said, "True and genuine worship is not to come to a certain place; it is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring certain gifts. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal part of man, speaks to and meets with God, who is immortal and invisible." In other words, true worship is encountering God.

All the program, music and message should lead us to encounter God. Without it our souls become restless. The second question was, "What is the purpose of worship?" I looked at Google and found out a good answer. "The purpose of our worship is to glorify, honor, praise, exalt and please God. Our worship must show our adoration and loyalty to God for His grace of forgiveness and salvation." In other words, worship should be God-centered and Jesus-centered.

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Now I am in the third quarter of my life. Do you know what that means? Third quarter means between the ages of 50 to 75. In our worship service I see all four quarters of people here together. (Raise your hands if you are under 50.). Some of us have been in UBF for less than a year and some people for more than 40 years. We are in all different stages of our journey of faith. During the third quarter of my life I found myself restless in my soul. I did not know why. I faithfully attended many meetings four or five times a week and performed my duties as a member of the church. The problem was that I did many things habitually without a personal encounter with God. I was a busy-body but had no deep joy of life.

I found this problem when I read a book, “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality” written by Peter Scazzero, a pastor of a large church in Flushing NYC. In his book he confessed he was like Martha, a busy-body going here and there. Martha rebuked Mary for her laziness and not helping her work. But the fact is that Jesus spoke well of Mary who just sat down beside Jesus and was eager to listen to him. Like Martha it is very easy for us to become a busy-body with many things to do, but the author said Martha and Mary’s life should be balanced like 50-50. Otherwise we will burn out easily from many activities and lose our joy of life. Where are we now? 90% Martha and 10% Mary? Or 80% and 20%?

In my third quarter of life I was restless because I did not go to campus, I did not fish, I did not write weekly testimonies (shame on me). I had only one Bible student because Pastor Kevin had mercy on me. My hair became gray and I had a generation gap, etc. In my restlessness I tried to find an answer. One day I read a book called, “Falling Upward” (very interesting topic; instead of falling down, falling upward) written by a Catholic priest Richard Rohr. He said we have two stages of life.

The first half of life is to build a container. The first half of life is for young people (or younger people). Young people like to compete and focus on winning such as playing sports (This year’s Super Bowl was great between the Patriots and the Seahawks). For young people, they need strong identity to feel proud of. It is through competing, disciplining yourself, winning, and feeling superiority. It is like sibling rivalry. Therefore young people are very proud of belonging to certain churches or tribes. According to Richard Rohr, this stage is necessary in building a container. However he also said some people spend their entire life just building a container.

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But there is the second half of life, usually over 50 years old. (Raise your hand if you are over 50). During this second half of life, our main job is to fill the container with spiritual fruit; such as unconditional love, heavenly joy and many other fruits of the Holy Spirit. According to Henri Nouwen, we can go through the stages of the prodigal son and then later the older son—a very critical, self-righteous person. But he said we all should grow to be like the father, who embraced and welcomed both of his children unconditionally. This is the stage of maturity, transformation and growing in the image of Jesus.

Then how can we fill the container with such a fruit? He said that without meditation and contemplation it is impossible. This year I chose my key verse from Psalm 1:2, **“But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.”** The Psalmist bore much fruit when he meditated on the word of God day and night like a tree planted by the water. Lack of meditation and contemplation is my weak point. This is not only my weak point but also the weak point of the entire Protestant church, including UBF.

Through contemplation, we can encounter the glory, beauty, majesty and awesomeness of our God. Through contemplation, we can encounter the beauty and grace of Jesus and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. (This is encountering the Triune God.) Our Lord Jesus, even though he was the Son of God, regularly spent quiet time with God in prayer and contemplation. This was the source of his joy, strength and mission. Jesus’ work and contemplation was well-balanced.

Let me stop here my long introduction. And let’s go back to the passage. Today’s passage is not easy because it is about Eschatology (that is, the End Times). The dictionary defines eschatology like this, “a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind.” This is a very challenging passage because Jesus predicted what would happen in the future, between Jesus’ ascension and his second coming. Even though I studied this passage many times, I do not pretend to be an expert. So let us study together.

Look at verse 1a. **“As Jesus was leaving the temple...”** In chapter 11 we learned that Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. He was a humble, gentle, spiritual king. But many people fervently welcomed Jesus, with human expectation for him to become a political king, like King David. Jesus knew he would be arrested in a few days and he would be mocked and spat upon. He also knew he would be killed by crucifixion (crucifixion is a more cruel punishment than beheading or being burned alive). Jesus’ heart must have been very heavy and

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lonely because nobody really understood his situation. Even his close disciples did not know what was going on in his heart.

Jesus' heart was doubly heavy because of the religious leaders' corruption. They were so-called spiritual leaders of the society. But Jesus witnessed firsthandly their corruption, greed and meaningless rituals in the holy temple of God. In spite of his heavy heart, Jesus decided to go up to Jerusalem where the enemies were waiting to arrest him and kill him. If I knew someone was going to arrest me and kill me in Evanston, I would never go back to Evanston and would try to find some other ways to escape.

Look at what the disciples said to Jesus. **“Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”** Not knowing what was going on inside of Jesus' heart, the disciples were amazed by the magnificent temple buildings covered with white marble stones and gold plates and said many “wows” (Wow! Wow! Amazing! Look at that!). Jesus was not upset by their many wows. Rather he took this opportunity to teach them very important lessons. Soon Jesus would be gone. After his death, there would be a lot of confusion and persecutions. There would be many false messiahs who would come in Jesus' name. Therefore Jesus wanted to protect his disciples from the terrible confusion and difficult times.

From verse 5, Jesus described what would happen after his death. There will be false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars. There will be betrayal, arrest of believers by the authorities, foreign invasion and massacres and so on. There will be many natural disasters. But Jesus said these things are just the beginning of birth pains. What does it mean that these things are only the beginning of birth pains? First birth pains are a sure sign of new life coming into this world. Second, birth pains will not last long. It will come to an end soon, then a new life.

In America many pregnant women ask their doctors to give anesthesia during the delivery because they could not endure the terrible labor pains. But in Jesus' time there was no anesthesia and all women had to go through terrible labor pains. Sometimes during labor some women can die of complications. It was a very dangerous time. During labor pains there is nothing much you can do about it. All you can do is a lot of prayer and a lot of endurance and more prayer. When my wife gave birth to our first baby in the hospital she experienced so much pain and screamed with a loud voice. At that time I was an intern in the hospital and sitting in the waiting room. And I could hear her screaming. After having our first child she said she will never have a baby again. But by God's grace she delivered three

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more babies. Thank God. We cannot imagine our life without our children. We enjoy them so much.

In verses 9-13 Jesus explains what his disciples must expect after Jesus' ascension. They will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. But Jesus also promises that the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Our God is the Creator of all mankind. He loves all people of the world as his own children, including Muslims. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. God is delaying his second coming and judgment until the gospel is proclaimed to all nations, so that more people may hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

Look at verses 12-13. **“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”** In America, to confess Jesus Christ is Lord is not dangerous; but in some countries of the world it can be very dangerous. Especially in the Middle East countries, China and North Korea, it is very dangerous to confess Jesus Christ is the Lord. One American tourist left his Bible in a hotel in North Korea; he was arrested and detained in prison for several months. Many Coptic Christians in Egypt have been persecuted and even killed. Recently in Libya, 21 Coptic Christians were arrested and beheaded by the seashore simply because they were Christians. In verse 14, Jesus warns them that a terrible thing would happen: **“the abomination that causes desolation.”** This prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Roman armies came to Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. However Jesus promised to shorten those days.

Verse 20 says, **“If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.”**

Here we learn that our God is concerned about his chosen people. For the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened the period of suffering and tribulation. Living in this troubled world we are often gripped with many kinds of fear; fear of losing our loved ones, fear of future security, fear of job stress, fear of sickness, and so on. What kind of fear do you have? Jesus did not promise us the absence of problems or troubles. He promised that he would be with us when we have troubles and persecutions. Jesus said in John 16:33. **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

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Our God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Our God is the Sovereign God. These days a great turmoil is going on in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria and Ukraine. I became fearful when I heard the news of ISIS in the Middle East that keeps growing, and I was fearful at the news of Americans beheaded and the Jordanian pilot who was burned alive. This is a dangerous war on ideology. An absolute belief system and self-righteousness led to revenge, violence and killing. Even in this tragic situation I need to hold on to God's sovereignty and pray. **“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”** One prominent Egyptian Muslim woman said on national television in Cairo. “I want to be a Christian. Because Muslims are killing each other in the name of Allah. But Christians love each other and they even love us.” Christian's love and joy is a powerful witness to Jesus. May God help us to love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves.

Look at verses 24-25. **“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.”** There will be cosmic catastrophe. But at that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. Here we learn that our God is moving world history forward. God has his own redemption plan which we don't fully understand. Our God is a great God. Our brain is as small as the size of a can of Coca-Cola. But our God is as big as an ocean. We don't know everything about God and his redemption plan. But in all situations we trust in God. Jesus' second coming will be God's great victory over the devil. Jesus will come again as the judge of the living and the dead.

We are living in the end times. We have seen a lot of things are happening right now as Jesus had predicted. False messiahs, wars, natural disasters, and so on. But these things are like birth pains. Birth pains may last less than one day. But after the labor pains, a new life is born, a bundle of joy! I know many young couples have little children and they enjoy them very much. I have seen they like to put their children's pictures on facebook. They are a source of joy. Our pain and suffering may last only for a while. But our joy and happiness with the Lord will last forever. Eternity is a long time! Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:18, **“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”** This is the hope of all Christians. Romans 8:24-25 says, **“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”**

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In verses 32-37 Jesus says no one knows the day or hour, not even the angels or Jesus himself. GOK. God only knows. Therefore our responsibility is to keep watch. We have responsibility as stewards of God. We are not the owner but stewards, caretakers for a while. Look at verse 37. **“What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch.’”**

In conclusion, God wants us to trust in Him in all situations. (This is the take-home message point). Jesus himself is a good example. Jesus trusted in God and his love in most difficult situations. Jesus’ death on the cross was unbearable pain and suffering and extreme loneliness. Nobody suffered more than Jesus. But Jesus did not doubt the love of God. He trusted in Him to the end. Jesus was not a superman. He was just like us. He struggled and overcame his fear and sorrow. Jesus is great because he looked beyond his death; with his spiritual eyes he saw his resurrection, ascension and his second coming. Jesus comforts us today. **“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** May God help us to overcome fear and sorrow and fill us with great joy because of Jesus.

(Silent prayer for one minute. We may truly worship God by encountering Him and listen to his voice, and pray for many suffering Christian brothers and sisters around the world.)