

Small Group Guide

Signs and Signals of Christ's Glorious Return

Based on Mark 13:14-27

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Open your time together in prayer, asking God to give your group ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts ready to be stirred by His Word.

KEY PASSAGE

Mark 13:14-27

Take a few minutes to have someone read the passage aloud before beginning discussion.

SERMON OVERVIEW

In this message, Pastor Virgil walked through the second half of Mark 13, where Jesus gives His disciples — including us today — signs and signals of His glorious return. Drawing heavily from the prophecy of Daniel, the sermon identified four major signs:

- Abomination that shakes us
- Devastation that stirs us
- Imitation that deceives us
- Manifestation that settles it all

The overarching call was one of urgency: to be about the business of proclaiming the gospel while there is still time.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The signs Jesus described in Mark 13 are not meant to frighten us into paralysis but to stir us into action as His church.
2. The gospel is not merely a story to be told — it is a verb, an action to be lived out daily.

3. False Christ's and false prophets are not a future threat alone; they are already present and active in our communities and culture.
4. God has not destined His church for wrath. The hope of Christ's return is meant to encourage believers and fuel their mission.
5. Heaven will be filled with people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The church should reflect that same heart here on earth.
6. Knowing about Jesus is not the same as knowing Jesus. A changed life is the evidence of genuine salvation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening Question

- When you think about the second coming of Christ, what is your honest emotional response — fear, excitement, indifference, or something else? Why do you think you feel that way?

Section 1: Shaken by Abomination (Mark 13:14)

- Pastor Virgil referenced Daniel's prophecy about the abomination of desolation. Even if we never personally witness that future event, he said we have "plenty of abominations before us" today. What do you think he meant by that? What are some examples you see in your own life or community?
- Jesus told His disciples to flee without hesitation — do not even go back for your cloak. What does that level of urgency say about the seriousness of the times we are living in? How does that urgency challenge the way we prioritize our daily lives?

Section 2: Stirred by Devastation (Mark 13:15-19)

- Pastor Virgil made a pointed statement about the church: "I am afraid the very instrument by which God intended for us to take the message has fallen asleep at the wheel." Do you agree or disagree? What evidence do you see of this in our broader culture?

- He also said: "Stop inviting people to church. Start inviting people to Jesus." What is the difference between those two invitations in a practical sense? How does that distinction change the way you approach conversations with people who do not yet know Christ?
 - Pastor Virgil described cultural Christianity — people who have religion but no real relationship with Jesus. How do we, as a church community, guard against that in our own lives and in the life of our congregation?
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Section 3: Deceived by Imitation (Mark 13:21-23)

- Jesus warned that false Christ's and false prophets would perform signs and wonders. Why do you think deception is so effective, even among those who consider themselves believers? What safeguards do you have in your own life to protect against spiritual deception?
 - Pastor Virgil mentioned that false religious systems are present in our workplaces, schools, and communities. How well-equipped do you feel to have a respectful but truthful conversation with someone from one of these backgrounds? What would help you feel more prepared?
 - Pastor Virgil referenced the Shema from Deuteronomy 6 — the responsibility of believers to teach their children and households about God in every moment of daily life. How intentional are you in doing this? What does that look like practically in your home?
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Section 4: Settled by Manifestation (Mark 13:26-27)

- Pastor Virgil described the rapture and the hope believers have that God has not destined His church for wrath, referencing 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11. Paul says to "encourage one another with these words." How often do you actually use the truth of Christ's return as a source of encouragement in your conversations with other believers?
- Pastor Virgil painted a picture of heaven filled with people from every nation, tribe, and language, and asked: "Wouldn't it be beautiful if we're the church that could look like heaven here on earth?" How does your group, your church, and your personal relationships reflect — or fall short of — that vision?

- Revelation 7:9-10 describes a great multitude before the throne. What would it mean for your group to take seriously the call to reach people who look, speak, and live differently than you do?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following to commit to as a group before your next meeting:

1. **Pray with intention.** Identify one person in your life who does not know Jesus — not just someone who does not attend church, but someone who has never truly encountered Christ. Commit to praying for them by name every day this week.
2. **Invite to Jesus, not just to church.** Look for one natural opportunity this week to share what Jesus has done in your life with someone outside the church. It does not have to be a formal gospel presentation — just an honest, personal conversation.
3. **Know what you believe and why.** Pastor Virgil mentioned that false religious systems are already in our communities. Take 30 minutes this week to study one key difference between biblical Christianity and a false religious system so you are better equipped to have honest, loving conversations.
4. **Encourage a fellow believer.** Using the truth of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, write a note, send a message, or have a conversation with a fellow believer who is struggling or grieving. Encourage them with the hope of Christ's return.
5. **Examine your fruit.** Pastor Virgil said, "When you find Jesus, you can't help but be changed by what he's doing in your life. If you didn't, then you aren't." Spend time in honest personal reflection this week asking God to reveal any area of your life where you have settled for religion over relationship.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Pastor Virgil closed with this summary:

"Abomination shakes us. Devastation stirs us. Desperation cries out from within us. Imitation deceives us. But it is Christ and His manifestation that settles it all for us."

Take a few moments as a group to sit with that statement. Then close in prayer, asking God to keep your hearts shaken enough to stay urgent, stirred enough to keep serving, and settled enough in the hope of Christ's return to face whatever comes.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Daniel 9:27 — The prophecy of the abomination of desolation
- Daniel 12:1 — The time of trouble and the promise of deliverance
- Revelation 7:3-10 — The sealed servants and the great multitude before the throne
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 — The coming of the Lord and the resurrection of believers
- 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 — God's people are not destined for wrath
- John 10:10 — Life lived in abundance through Christ
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9 — The Shema and the call to teach God's Word in every moment of life

This guide was prepared based on the sermon preached at First Baptist Church of Stanleyville.