

Jesus and His Allegedly Failed End Times Prophecy: The Straightforward Solution to the Supposedly Insoluble Problem of Jesus's Parousia (Mark 13:1-37)

The interpretive situation with Mark 13 has been recently summarized: “There is perhaps no one single chapter of the synoptic gospels which has been so much commented upon in modern times as Mark 13.”¹ From D.F. Strauss to R. Bultmann, Mark 13 is ultimately seen to put Jesus into what amounts to a hall of shame since Jesus's end of the world predictions, allegedly, either did not come true, or – to justify them – these end-times-sayings need to be relegated to merely apocalyptically exaggerated language of metaphors, and are not therefore truly prophetic predictions. More recent studies, when trying to figure out how to organize the discourse in Mark 13 of Jesus's prophetic predictions, scholars note the dire situation among exegetes: “Linguistically oriented monographs [specialized studies] and articles have not, thus far, contributed any significant insights into how the linguistic choices Mark has made in his composition can be seen to be addressing concrete rhetorical ... needs of his community.”² This article is a proposed remedy to the dire situation. What is at stake? In short, if the lion's share of scholarship from Strauss to present be correct, we should likely fault Jesus for badly predicting the fall of Jerusalem to be linked with the end of the world. Mark's Gospel is tempting to date (by scholars) to around the siege of Jerusalem (AD 68-70), since chapter 13 is read to record claims about what Jesus said, as remembered among his disciples, namely, predictions about the end of Jerusalem and of the world both coming in immediate sequence of time, one after the other. But, after Jerusalem's destruction, when the world kept spinning, Jesus's end-times discourses purportedly needed to be sanitized since his prophecies did not actually happen. Allegedly, Jesus's mess of a failed end-times prophecy is still visible in Mark's poorly reedited material (according to some) of Mark 13. In response, I plan to argue that an easy revelation of the underlying literary structure, that is, a demonstration of how Mark uses chiasms or literary devices to make Mark 13 a very organized text, allows any reader to see a very coherent prophecy of both the destruction of Jerusalem's and a well-organized but completely separate prophecy about the end the world. My contention is that modern exegetes fail to organize properly the literary devices in chapter 13 in a coherent and convincing way that would easily provide my unmistakable interpretation. My organization of the material will reveal a clear-thinking Jesus who precisely answers two different questions fielded him by his disciples and whose end of the world prediction proves to be cogent and reconcilable with the other synoptic gospels. The net result of this proper organization of Mark's records of Jesus's speech absolutely precludes the olden, dated apocalyptic-Jesus of immediate return that has been used to impugn Jesus as a false and failed apocalypticist.

1. The Organization of Mark 13:1-4

I begin by noting that Jesus is asked two separate questions by his disciples. The first question is in orange and the second question is in crimson. The orange question is sometimes mistaken to include the crimson question, as if the crimson were a case of parallelism, doublet, repetition or tautology.

NKJV³ Mark, chapter 13: Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!”² And Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not ‘one stone shall be left upon another’ (LXX Haggai 2:15)” that shall not be thrown down.”³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew were asking

¹ Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone On Another*, Studies in the Significance of the Father of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 8.

² Gustavo Martin, “Procedural Register in the Olivet Discourse: A Functional Linguistic Approach to Mark 13,” *Biblica* 90 (2009): 460.

³ I have mainly quoted verbatim from the New King James Version, except when I deemed a correction to the text better reflective of the Greek or a Semiticism.

[imperfect: implying asking continuously or more than one question] Him privately, ⁴“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled/consummated?”⁴

[Commentary on Mark 13:1-4 above]

The assertion that there are two questions that merit by Jesus two answers in this chapter is not considered an unreasonable conclusion by scholars. Their problem has historically been disagreements on how to divide up the rest of the chapter into Jesus’s two answers. I have not seen any proposal by scholars surveyed to suggest two (and only two) chiasms efficiently and succinctly providing separate compact answers to the disciples’ question in Mark 13:4. The closest solution to the problem lies in a less known scholar William Most:

“This generation will not pass away until all these things be accomplished.” It did not mean Jesus thought the end was near. No, we gather from Mt 24 [“The disciples came to him privately, saying: <1.> ‘Tell us, when will this be, and <2.> what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?’”⁵] that the disciples had asked two questions:⁶ what are signs for fall of Jerusalem? signs for your return? Form criticism shows that often passages are put together out of lines that once were independent. So, we can see that Mk 13:30 originally referred to the fall of Jerusalem.⁷

My analysis is strengthened by Rev. Dr. Most, but I take issue with the underlined passage above. The literary form (that is, Jesus’s answers rearranged into elaborate chiasms by Mark) shall prove that *Mark* did not originally employ this material to refer to Jerusalem. However, if Rev. Dr. Most meant that Mark’s source (for example, now lost Jesus-sayings,) was used by Mark so that he displaced an originally Jerusalem-destruction-saying (namely, “This generation, etc.”; Mk 13:30) and transferred it for use to verse 30 within Jesus’s end-times-sayings in Mark 13:24-37, then I have no interest to engage in this kind of speculation on source criticism. My project is only to show that the original literary devices used by Mark, at the outset of his presumably published redaction of his gospel, are still to be found perfectly preserved in today’s printed versions of the Greek New Testament (for example, the UBS).

⁴ Mark, chapter 13, ^{verse 3} Καὶ καθημένου αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν κατέναντι τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐπηρώτα αὐτὸν κατ’ ἰδίαν Πέτρος καὶ Ἰάκωβος καὶ Ἰωάννης καὶ Ἀνδρέας· ⁴[**Question #1**]: Εἰπὸν ἡμῖν πότε ταῦτα ἔσται, [**Question #2**] καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα. ⁵ ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἤρξατο λέγειν αὐτοῖς· Βλέπετε μὴ τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ·

⁵ Robertson, A. T (ed.), *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Mt 24–25), (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software).

⁶ Compare Luke 21:7, which also demonstrate two questions to answer by Jesus: “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?”

⁷ William Most, *The Consciousness of Christ* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1980), 18: <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/most/getchap.cfm?WorkNum=215&ChapNum=5>.

2. The Organization of Mark 13:5-23

[Jesus answers **Question #1** (Mk 13:5-23):]

[Chiastic Structure #1 A₁-B₁-C-B₂-A₂:]

A₁⁵And Jesus, answering them, began to say: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶For **many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many** (cf. Acts 5:34-37). ⁷But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars (cf. Romans 8:35), do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. ⁸For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places (cf. Matthew 27:54, 28:2; Acts 16:26), and there will be famines (*limoi*) (cf. Romans 8:35; Acts 11:28) and troubles (*tarachai*) (cf. Galatians 1:7, 5:10; Acts 12:18, 17:13, 19:23).

B₁ **These are the beginnings of birth pangs** (*odinôn*).⁹ “But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to Sanhedrins (*synedria*) (Acts 4:5-7, 5:17-21), and you will be beaten in the synagogues (Acts 9:1-2). You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake (cf. Acts 12:1-4), for a testimony to them.

C ¹⁰And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations (cf. Acts 2:1-11). ¹¹But when they arrest you and deliver you up (cf. Acts 4:1-12), do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 4:8-10; 5:29-32). ¹²Now brother will betray brother to death (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:25-27; Acts 7:1, 8:1-3), and a father his child (cf. Acts 7:2); and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.¹⁴ “So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not” (let the reader understand), “Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. ¹⁶And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.”⁸

B₁ ¹⁷**But woe to those who have [a child] in their bellies** (*tais en gastri echousais*)⁹ and to those who are nursing babies in those days!¹⁰ ¹⁸And pray that your flight may not be in winter. ¹⁹For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. ²⁰And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.¹¹

A₂ ²¹Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, **here is the Christ!**’ or, ‘**Look, He is there!**’ **do not believe it** (cf. Acts 5:34-37). ²²For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.”

⁸ Compare Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged*, trans. & ed. F., & Whiston, W (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 737 (below footnote no. 9).

⁹ Compare Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 650–676 (no. 246):

In the daytime also, a woman with child had her belly so violently struck, as she was just come out of her house, that the infant was carried to the distance of half a furlong; so great was the force of that engine.

¹⁰ Compare Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 737:

There was a certain woman that dwelt beyond Jordan, her name was Mary; her father was Eleazar, of the village Bethesub, which signifies the House of Hyssop. She was eminent for her family and her wealth and had fled away to Jerusalem with the rest of the multitude and was with them besieged therein at this time. [...] She then attempted a most unnatural thing; (205) and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, “O, thou miserable infant! For whom shall I preserve thee in this war, this famine, and this sedition? (206) As to the war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives, we must be slaves! This famine also will destroy us, even before that slavery comes upon us[...] (207) Come on; be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews.” (208) As soon as she had said this she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate the one half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed. (209) Upon this the seditious came in presently, and smelling the horrid scent of this food, they threatened her, that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not show them what food she had gotten ready. She replied that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them; and withal uncovered what was left of her son. (210) Hereupon they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them, “This is my own son; and what hath been done was mine own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself! (211) Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous and do abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one half, let the rest be reserved for me also.” (212) After which, those men went out trembling, being never so much affrighted at anything as they were at this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother. Upon which the whole city was full of this horrid action immediately; and while everybody laid his miserable case before their own eyes, they trembled, as if this unheard-of action had been by themselves. (213) So those that were thus distressed by the famine were very desirous to die; and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not lived long enough either to hear or to see such miseries.

¹¹ This could be related to the plausibly attested passage by Josephus, knowing a tradition of Jerusalem being destroyed in revenge for the persecution and murder of the Christian James the Just to please certain Jewish leaders. See Sabrina Inowlocki, “Did Josephus Ascribe the Fall of Jerusalem to the Murder of James, Brother of Jesus?,” *Revue des Études Juives* 170 (2011):21-49

[Commentary on Mark 13:5-23]

The chiasm A₁-B₁-C-B₂-A₂ clearly demarcates and isolates Jesus's answer #1 to [question 1](#), where Jesus covers events from dates starting around Jesus's passion (around AD 31-33) until the destruction of Jerusalem (see A₁ + A₂) in AD 70.

Jesus begins the chiasm at **A₁** in Mark by predicting distant *future events of generically national significance*: (i.) More than one false messiah shall arise in Israel (fulfilled Acts 5:34-37) as attested by Gamaliel,¹² (ii.) then more than one war and rumors of other wars will occur (for Jews the significant wars with nations included the Roman versus Samaritans, Samaritans versus Galilean nation, and Jewish nations versus the Romans),¹³ (iii.) then two earthquakes of eschatological significance happen to the disciples, which are recorded after the parallel passage to Mark 13 in Matthew chapter 24, at Matthew 27:54, 28:2. There is a fairly destructive earthquake, with equally supernatural significance, as recorded by Luke in Acts 16:26. (iii.) Finally, since many locales throughout the empire are hit with famines, this fulfills Jesus's prediction per Acts 11:28.¹⁴ Interestingly, St. Paul (Romans 8:35), using the same vocabulary of Mark 13 and Acts 7, regarding famines and troubles (*limos, thlipsis*), claims that these – as well as (Roman?) persecution, (Roman induced?) famine, danger, and sword cannot separate Roman Christians from Christ. Although in no way a direct prophecy of future of Jerusalem, it is an uncanny allusion to all the descriptions of what the Christians and Jews in Jerusalem would endure shortly after St. Paul's martyrdom by Nero.

Starting in chiasm **B₁**, Jesus then shifts to a different plane of history, *specifically relevant to the future-personal lives of the disciples* (B₁ + B₂): (i.) plural Sanhedrins will forcibly call the disciples before them for judgment against them (fulfilled in Acts 4:5-7; 5:17-21),¹⁵ (ii.) and local synagogues will have the disciples beaten, starting (it would appear) with the apostles handpicked coworker Stephen who was attacked and seized at a synagogue (Acts 6:12). This treatment was formalized for Christians in synagogues under the sphere of influence of Jerusalem by formal letter (Acts 9:1-2) (iii.) Eventually, preaching in synagogues leads to Jewish locals recruiting leaders of their city to persecute (*diôgmos*) St. Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12:50), although this does not appear to be an official trial or act of the local officials yet. Nonetheless, the persecution takes on the aspect of beatings and stoning and locale government sanction shortly afterwards (Acts 14:1-7). Finally, those converted by St. Paul and the apostles' representative Barnabas are denounced by Jews of the synagogue before a Roman magistrate for making Jesus rival the "king" Caesar (Acts 17:1-9). This abuse of St. Paul, confirmed by the apostles in his mission, culminates in the synagogues by his official arrest by Roman soldiers leading to his flogging (Acts 22:22-27). Jesus's prophecy is totally fulfilled on this point, when the Jews successfully get two Roman magistrates in a row to perform an official investigation into St. Paul for potential crimes (Acts 24:1-27) that leads to the "king" Caesar getting involved (Acts 25:1-12). This fulfills partially Jesus's claim about plural "kings" persecuting the apostles prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. The absolute fulfillment of Jesus's prophecy comes at the

¹² This prediction is confirmed in Acts 5, where two false messiahs are named:

Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. ³⁶ For some time ago Theudas [[false christ #1](#)] rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. ³⁷ After this man, Judas of Galilee [[false christ #2](#)] rose up in the days of the census and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.

¹³ Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, III.312-315; XII.830-831.

¹⁴ Acts 11:28 "Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine (*limos*) throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar."

¹⁵ See [Sanhedrin judgment #1](#) at Acts 4:

⁵ And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, ⁶ as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

See [Sanhedrin judgment #2](#), fulfilling exactly Jesus's prophecy in Acts 5:17-18, 21:

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison ... And when they heard *that*, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council (*synedrion*) together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

second hearing before “king” Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32). As Acts of the Apostles ends, we see that it follows with great precision each historical assertion of Jesus very faithful to the sequence of Jesus’s thought. (iv.) Subsequently, as later attested precisely by Josephus, Jesus states that pregnant and nursing women will bear the most infamous brunt of the destruction (Mark 13:17), (v.) and finally Jerusalem will suffer its worst destruction since its existence known from the time of Genesis, coupled with an unheard of atrocity, not even recorded in the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem, namely, cannibalism by a noble mother of her suckling child, shocking the entire city (as already cited in Josephus). (vi.) Then, Jesus asserts that there will have been no ethnically Jewish survivors in Jerusalem (and perhaps among Jews at large) except for the fact that Christians or “the elect” were to be found in Jerusalem to mitigate God’s destroying hand, for whose sake God spares the population. This claim of Jesus might be related to a future Jewish interpretation attested by Josephus of Jerusalem’s destruction due to Jewish persecution of the elect “brother of the so-called christ” “James the Just.”

Moving to the center of the chiasmic structure in **C**, Jesus combines generic prophecies of national history about all the peoples of Jerusalem with specialized prophecies concerning the disciples so that both **A₁-A₂** and **B₁-B₂** together reach their culmination in **C**. Mark 13:10: “And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations (*panta ta ethnê*).” This phrase makes sense within the chiasmic structure to be a prediction of the disciples preaching to “all nations” at Jerusalem in the temple area, as fulfilled in Acts 2:5: “And Jews were dwelling in Jerusalem, pious men, from every nation (*pantos ethnous*) among peoples under heaven.” Effectively, Jesus’s prediction in Mark 13:10 was fulfilled at Pentecost! This starts the unfolding of the dire sequence of events.

Subsequently, Jesus predicts in **C** that the post-Pentecostal missionary work in the temple and greater Jerusalem will lead to the disciples’ arrest (Mark 13:11), just as Luke records in the next chapters 4-5 of Acts, fulfills Jesus’s prediction: “But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11) is historically fulfilled:

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: ⁹ If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, ¹⁰ let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. (Acts ch. 4)

²⁹ But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹ Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.” (Act ch. 5)

The clear allusion by Acts chapters 4-5 to Jesus’s prophecy as fulfilled is quite obvious once the chiasmic key is used to decipher Mark 13. Finally, Acts may even be useful to understand that Fathers put to death sons and brothers their own brothers, since St. Stephen addresses (due to the religious leaders being called “fathers” and other members of the Sanhedrin are his racial cousins = *adelphos* = *syngenes*; cf. Mark 6:3-4; Matthew 1:3; Romans 9:3). Stephen calls out to them: “Fathers and brothers” (Acts 7:1-2, 8:1-3) before they kill him. Although this explanation is plausible, it is somewhat weakened by the fact that I cannot find a source to authenticate Jesus’s subsequent claim that sons will put to death their Fathers (Mark 13:12). So, although St. Stephen is a clear candidate to fulfill the first part of the prophecy, it is not obvious how it connects to patricides in the next clause.

Next, the end term for the apostles not to scatter, or not to flee Jerusalem for good, has been interpreted in well-known studies to denote the period of Emperor Caligula (died AD 41). After Caligula’s attempt to place his statue in the temple, then, Jesus wishes the disciples to flee Jerusalem and it is perhaps because James the Just “brother of the Lord” stays in Jerusalem that Jesus’s warning is materialized by James’s assassination around AD 62 in Jerusalem). Finally, I have already provided the footnotes in the chiasm (above **C**), so that the reader can see that each prediction by Jesus about women and children and even the tactical mistake of Jews running to Jerusalem for protection by the walls from the Romans (who

were taking smaller towns and cities) is mistaken. After this exposition, the degree of chronological sense and historical accuracy of the Jesus prophecies are truly remarkable and even serve as a basis for claiming that Acts of the Apostles is based upon the same original data as Mark 13. However, this argument is too far afield and would require us to compare Luke 21:5-36 (his rendition of the material in Mark 13) with Acts chapters 1-26.

3. The Organization of Mark 13:24-37

[Jesus answers **Question #2** (Mk 13:24-37):]

[Chiastic Structure #1 A₁-B₁-C-A₂-B₂:]

A₁²⁴ “**But in those days**, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

B₁²⁶ **Then they will see the Son of Man** coming in the clouds with great power and glory.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.

C²⁸ “Now learn this parable from the fig tree (cf. LXX Haggai 2:20): When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is present. ²⁹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is present—at the doors! ³⁰ **Assuredly, I say to you, this *generation* will by no means pass away till all these things take place.** ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

A₂³² “**But of that day** and hour no one knows,

B₂ not even the **angels** in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **Look, watch** and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ³⁴ It is like **a man** going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. ³⁵ **Watch** therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—³⁶ lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say to you, I say to all: **Watch!**”

[Commentary on Mark 13:24-37]

The chiastic structure is based upon word plays: A₁-A₂ begin with talking about “**those days**,” while B₁-B₂ begin a new chiasm by talking about “**seeing**” and “**looking**” where the mention of a man (“**Son of man**,” “**a man**”). The **bold** phrase in C presents the classic and only meaningful objection to my interpretation of this prophecy. As we shall see, modern translations often choose a misleading vocabulary word “***generation***” to confuse the clear and sensible meaning of this prophecy. Once this puzzle is solved, an amazingly simple prophetic message can be affirmed that shows the waste of time that the obsessions from Strauss to Bultmann until present have used as their principal club to beat Christians with, since they allegedly believe in a failed apocalypticist whose kingdom of destruction and world ending never came as Jesus allegedly thought it would at the destruction of Jerusalem.

A₁-A₂: To understand A₁, we must turn to A₂: There will be a cosmic destruction in A₁, but when does Jesus chiastically expect it? In answer, he says: “that day and hour no one knows!” Does Jesus exclude his humanity from the “not knowing”? No! He doubles down that “the Son of Man” doesn’t even know. I underline the fact that this chiasm A is impersonal or generic, not addressed to disciples (and therefore not to be confused with something imminent for their ministry). However, the final exhortations only (B₂) find a reason that disciples should not ignore the last day, even if it is not imminent such that Jesus’s humanity from Mark 13 (until well after the destruction of Jerusalem) doesn’t even need to know about it. Jesus is clear that “after” (*meta*) the destruction/tribulation (Mark 13:24), sometime in the future, the cosmos will eventually be destroyed.

Excursus on Christology for lay readers: Here “Son of Man” (per the Hebrew) can also be translated “Son of Adam” (cf. Luke 3:8: “Son of Adam, Son of God”). To be “Son of Man” is not to be “Son of God.” Rather, Son of Man is from Adam’s seed, but Son of God is somehow directly

from God in heaven. This distinction is a quick point of departure for noting (in Chalcedonian terms) that the human-seed of Adam does not know the day nor hour, but the Word of God or Son who is one with the Father does. In Chalcedonian (AD 451) terms, this is just helping our everyday reader see that it is ok to admit (as did for example St. Ephrem and St. Athanasius) that the human nature is per se limited in knowledge and even brain storage capacity. Whatever Jesus (the combo of Son of God + Son of Man into one whole item, not two separate persons) in his human brain may have metaphorically downloaded from the divine icloud connection with the Son (pre-existent Word of John 1:2-3), he was limited in his download capacity. He was infused in his human brain at certain times with what was needed for his mission. It can be interpreted in an orthodox Christology, that the human brain of Jesus need not have stored all facts about the universe (since the brain is per se limited), but that a selection of knowledge is stored in the human organ according to the Son's purposes. For the part of the Son (Word), the divine mind in Christ always possesses all knowledge. So, Jesus as one whole possesses all knowledge but in virtue of his divine mind not in virtue of his human brain. This distinction was deemed helpful by many readers who will be familiar with Arius's objection that Christ's ignorance means he isn't allegedly God. Instead, it merely means that his brain isn't made out of infinite being, but material being that is limited like you and me and that it stores whatever makes Jesus's human nature, albeit as perfect as possible for his divine mission and sinlessness even in his pre-resurrectional earthly existence.

B₁-B₂: Returning to the Bible text, note that **B₁** might resolve the all-knowing Jesus (the personality of the Word) with his ignorant humanity (the human nature) tension in the way that a Chalcedonian (AD 451) Christian would also do: When Jesus comes riding the clouds (like the Father himself in the Old Testament) it is clear that he knows like his Father, even in his humanity, the day and the hour. As we can suspect, after his death and resurrection, the humanity of Jesus received infused (viz., downloaded) knowledge of the second coming in all its detail. Since Mark 13 is before the resurrection, the humanity of Jesus (and therefore his human speeches and teachings) has nothing to contribute to the discussion, except to say that it is wise to watch as if it can come randomly lest the disciples become complacent.

C: The Hebraism "near" has been long catalogued as really meaning "present." Once we change *engys-near* to mean "present" then the meaning of Jesus is very clear with his sayings: If I see the stars falling and if I experience the sun no longer giving light, I know that the end is at the doors, it is present, just as a tree that has foliage means that the winter season is already passed and we are in spring/summer already.

But what about the most troubling phrase, which seems to be the only hurdle that we might not be able to overcome in order to sufficiently answer Strauss and Bultmann? Doesn't Jesus assert:

Assuredly, I say to you, this *generation* (*genea*) will by no means pass away till all these things take place.³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

First, an excellent explanation of the underlying Hebrew, though to a degree speculative, come from Rev. Dr. William Most:

Mark 13:30 says: "This *generation* will not pass away before all these things take place." [...] Hebrew *dor* can mean generation, but can also mean a time period - here - the Christian regime - and so the sense could be that the Christian regime is the last phases of God's dealings with our race. It is never to be replaced as the Old Testament was.¹⁶

What is more, in the disciples' **question #2** to Jesus, scholars are wont to accept Matthew 24:3 as properly interpretive of Mark's "to be consummated (*synteleisthai*)" (Mark 13:4b): "And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age (*synteleias tou aiōnos*)?" As one scholar summarizes it: "*synteleisthai* [to be consummated] is correctly interpreted by Matthew as *synteleia tou aiōnos*."¹⁷ Taken together, this means that the best translation of *generation* (*genea*) is "age" or "period" so that "this age/period" is the post-destruction age/period between Jerusalem's sack and the end of the world. This actually suggests a very long period of time, given the way that an age is looked upon in Biblical history. However, Rev. Dr. Most also notes that *genea* has connotations (as well in Hebrew) with race. A second,

¹⁶ William Most, *Chapter 6: The 1964 Instruction of the Biblical Commission*, paragraph 46:

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/most/getchap.cfm?worknum=6&chapNum=7&numbers=yes¶num=46#P46>.

¹⁷ Gaston, *No Stone On Another*, 12.

poorer, option would be then that “this [surviving] race [of Christians]” will by no means pass away until the stars start to fall and they along with the universe are destroyed like Jerusalem had been. Yet, I tend to prefer “this age (*aiôn*)” (like Matthew’s interpretation) will not pass away, since this chiasmic structure answers the question “when”, as does the disciples’ first question concern a “when”. Hence, Jesus’s answer ought to be “at time ‘x’.” So, Jesus gives the unknown time ‘x’ that nobody save the Father knows following the age of destruction and period of Christians that lasts for some time until the stars fall out of the sky. In light of this clear and unforced interpretation, I think that I am in a position to actually make complete sense of the next phrase in a way that exegetes surveyed seem unable to do: “Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.” That is: After the end of the world, my prophecy is validated forever. Jesus’s statement is perfectly linked with **A₁**. This is not forced interpretation but a natural conclusion to the prophecy on how **A₁** leads to the verification of Jesus’s prediction.

Conclusions

The disciples’ **question #1** and **question #2** are attested as separate questions in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Thus, they demand two separate answers. Jesus’s answers in Mark’s version of Jesus’s responses avoid completely cross over and confusion by hermetically sealing **question #1** within a chiasmic structure so that its contents cannot be used or contaminate the answer #2 to **question #2** that also enjoys a sealed off literary device or chiasmic structure to separate it from Jesus’s answer #1. Scholars have struggled to find the way to disentangle the various lines of Mark 13, often thinking that the two are meshed together or somehow interdependent. They are clearly independent questions that received independent answers using independent discourses with their own literary devices. The only point of contact between them lies in the fact that the end term of answer #1 (destruction of Jerusalem) is (in the minds of the apostles) connected to the end times. Jesus only allows a cosmic significance in the destruction of Jerusalem in the sense of keeping its date as the point of departure for the Christian age or race to survive a whole age until at some unknown future time the entire world will perish. To emphasize how little is known about the end times, Jesus’s answer #1 is so detailed that it looks to be an outline from historical material that forms the very basis for St. Luke’s Acts of the Apostles. Its accuracy and chronicle of events uncannily coincide with the pre-Neronian history of the Christian Church. On the other hand, Jesus is obscure and undetailed about the end of the world, a kill-joy if his purpose is to connect it to the fall of Jerusalem. For that reason, Jesus decides to use his moral authority to exhort the disciples to watch just in case it might be that the end might come while their master is gone away and they are still alive. The difficulty is, of course, after Jesus’s resurrection that an *immortal* master is away in a far-off land has no intrinsic reason to be in a hurry to return to his mortal household. After all, the aging process and death are no longer factors dictating when he will return to the house of his servants the disciples. In short, there is no reason in Jesus’s clear answers to two separate questions, to misread him as a failed apocalypticist who was delusional in connecting the fall of Jerusalem with the end of the world.