

**THE SON OF MAN WILL GATHER HIS ELECT FROM THE FOUR WINDS - Commento al Vangelo di p. Alberto Maggi OSM**

**Mark 13, 24-32**

***But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.***

***“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.***

***“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.***

Chapter 13 of Mark’s gospel is extremely complicated. The evangelist is aware of this to the point that in verse 14 he says, “let the reader understand”.

Let’s see if we can understand what the evangelist gives us. “ *But in those days, after that tribulation.. “ .....the tribulation was the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, that Jesus had announced. And here Jesus, referring to the texts of the prophets, especially the prophet Isaiah, uses the prophetic language of the fall of the oppressive regimes.*

And Jesus says: *"..the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,.."* the sun and moon in that culture were divinities worshiped by the pagan populations. Therefore these pagan divinities will lose their splendor. Why? Jesus had said before "And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations." (v. 10) So the process of the liberation that began with the fall of Jerusalem, begins to have effect. The announcement of the good news with the light, the splendor of the true God, puts the false divinities in the shade.

Here are the effects: *".. and the stars will be falling from heaven,"* What is meant by the stars? At that time all those that held power, kings, emperors, Pharosers, considered themselves of a divine condition, and for this they were figuratively represented in the heavens, considered stars.

So Jesus, through the evangelist, tells us that all those regimes, powers, that base themselves so false divinities, at the moment of the announcement of Jesus' gospel, these false divinities will lose their splendor and these stars will fall one after another,

Here the reference to Jesus is the oracle against Babylon of the prophet Isaiah, where the prophet meets with the king of Babylon and says: *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low"* (Isaiah 14, 12)

Therefore the positive effect of the announcement of Jesus' good news is that all powerful structures, every regime based on power, will fall for the liberation of mankind.

*"...and the powers in the heavens will be shaken."* In the heavens, according to the evangelist, there is the Father, the son of Man and the angels. The powers that usurp the divine condition, and begin to be shaken.

Therefore Jesus ensures: *"And then they will see.. "* Whom will they see? The powerful fall from their thrones. *"..the Son of Man coming in clouds "* Clouds represent the divine condition *"..with great power and glory."* In the moment in which the powers are shaken, the stars will begin to fall, the power and glory of the Son of Man will manifest itself.

Jesus adds that *".. he will send out the angels.."* that is all those that have helped to realize his works, *".. and gather his elect"*. The fall of the persecutors will be the triumph of the persecuted. *"....from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven."* All this for a new beginning.

Then Jesus continues: *"From the fig tree..."* The fig tree has already appeared in this gospel as the image of the temple, the religious institution that was all splendors but no fruit, all leaves but no fruit. *".. learn its lesson:"* the lesson is the parable pronounced by Jesus against the religious institution, the high priests, the parable of the murderous tenants to whom God will take away the vineyard.

*".. as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near So also, when you see these things taking place,"* Jesus speaks to the community, *".. you know that he is near, at the very gates."* Who is near? What is at the gates? The kingdom of God. The moment Jerusalem and the temple fall, this great obstacle to preach the good news also to the gentiles; at the moment of

the announcement of the good news all the powers that base themselves on the exploitation of mankind will begin to fall, here is the beginning of the kingdom of God.

*And Jesus ensures; "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."* We know that the destruction of Jerusalem was in the year 70. The downfall of Jerusalem will allow the gentiles to enter into the kingdom of God. *"Heaven and earth will pass away,"* everything will pass *"..but my words will not pass away."* Therefore the absolute certainty that if the community announce and live Jesus' good news, every unjust system, every oppressive system will fall because all the powerful, all the regimes are built on sand and eventually they are destined to fall.

Then this passage finishes with the image of great faith. *"But concerning that day.."* the day of the death of Jesus *".. or that hour,"* the hour of the persecution and death of his disciples, *"..no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."*

What is it that Jesus wants to say? It is not important to know the moment, but to know that it is in the hands of the Father. Therefore, this page closes with the invitation to have complete faith in the Father's works. So it is a page full of positivity, certainly not a page to put fear in a person, how to free them and above all it is a page that encourages the small community of believers that find themselves impotent in front of great regimes that govern the world.