

NSS Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum Support Materials

Religious Tradition Module 2: Christianity

- The Signs of the Coming of the Kingdom
- Parables
- The Sermon on the Mount



NSS Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum Support Materials

2

Prediction of the destruction of the Temple

3 - 36

No one knows about the day

37 - 55



Topic 4

The Signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God

Suggested teaching time: 2 Periods (1 hour per period)

Main Points:

1. Prediction of the destruction of the Temple
2. No one knows about the day

Text Interpretation:

The Kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' preaching ministry. The coming of the Kingdom of God is characterised by God's salvation of mankind and His absolute reign over all creation.

The Kingdom of God mentioned by Jesus can be described as "already, but not yet." On the one hand, the Kingdom of God is already here through the manifestations of Jesus' preaching, healing, exorcism and Crucification. On the other hand, the Kingdom is not yet in its full expression until the last day.

Therefore, Jesus taught his disciples praying "May your Kingdom come." in the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:10), so as to urge the final coming of the reign of God.

In chapter 13 of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus foretold about the End of Days. There would be various catastrophes. False prophets and false Christs would appear, creating troubles. The Son of Man would descend onto the world in glory and the Kingdom of God would emerge. The mankind would receive judgment during the Second Coming of Jesus before entering the Kingdom of God. However, Jesus clearly stated that neither anyone nor the Son knew when that day or hour will come. Only the Father knew (Mk 13:32). Since the day of the Second Coming will come in sudden, followers should be well-prepared so that they are ready to meet and welcome the Lord at any moment.

Period 1 : Prediction of the destruction of the Temple

1. Biblical references : Mark 13:1-6

2. Objectives :

- To learn about Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the Temple on the last day.
- To learn about Jesus' proclamation that when the last day came, someone would claim themselves as Christ to deceive people. Christians must be cautious.
- To learn to be cautious in our daily lives, and able to identify any unhealthy religious organisations.



3. Teaching Strategies

Background Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus pointed at the Temple and foretold its destruction on the last day. • Jesus warned and reminded the disciples the danger they would face on the last day. Someone would claim themselves as Christ and distort the teachings of Christ. • Jesus gave early reminder to the disciples in order to protect them.
Issues for Explorations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we cautiously identify unhealthy religions?
Enquiry Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be the destiny of the Temple on the last day? • What kind of danger would the disciples encounter on the last day? • How can we cautiously identify the unhealthy religions?
Learning Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher asks the students to ponder over the emblematic meaning of "The 911 Incident" in which two airplanes crashed into the World Trade Centres in US. Help the students understand Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of the Temple on the last day.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By group discussion, let the students understand that Jesus had reminded the disciples of the danger they would encounter on the last day: someone would claim themselves as Christ and distort the teachings of Christ. • By comparing different religions, let the students learn more about the unhealthy religious organisations. Moreover, remind students to be cautious about falling into the traps of various unhealthy religious organisations.
Key Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Temple • The last day • False Christs
Generic skills, values and attitudes involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the summary of "Enquiry Questions, Skills, Values and Attitudes" listed under the activities.
High-order Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the characteristics of the unhealthy religious organisations?
Extended Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the religious rituals, activities, financial status, etc. of the legal Christian organisations.

Activity One

Enquiry Questions	Generic Skills	Values and Attitudes
What was Jesus' prophecy about the Temple on the Judgment Day?	communication skills, collaboration skills	independent and critical attitude

Teaching Steps :

Step 1: Teacher involves students in preparation work, allowing students to feel the turbulent power arose from the collapse of a magnificent building.

- Teacher shows part one of “PowerPoint 1” (The Days of Destruction). Students will look at the pictures of the World Trade Centres in New York before “The 911 Incident”.
- Teacher and students discuss :
 - How did the general public feel towards the buildings?
 - Do you think the buildings signify anything? For instance, the prosperity of America? Or America being one of the most powerful countries in the world?
- Teacher continues with part two of “PowerPoint 1” (The Days of Destruction). Teacher asks students to ponder over “The 911 Incident” in which the airplanes crashed into the World trade Centres. Teacher then leads students to discuss :
 - How do you feel when you witness the collapse of the buildings?
 - How did the Americans feel when they witnessed the collapse of the buildings? Were they astounded? Or horrified? Or thrilled?
 - What would the Americans think when they witnessed the collapse of the buildings? For instance, the most advanced city in America being destroyed? Or the fall of their country? Or even the end of the world?

Step 2: Teacher points out :

- It is understandable that people would regard the disastrous attack as the end of the world.
- Indeed, what people think now is very similar to how people perceived the End of Days in Christianity long time ago. Before Jesus was born, the Jews (about the time in between the Two Testaments) believed that God would enter the human history one day. That day was called the Day of the Lord (or “That day”, “The last day”)

- Before the last day comes, there will be a time of turbulence as well as judgment. Thereafter, a new heaven and earth will be created. It will be a new era filled with glory.
- In these two periods, let us learn about how Jesus described the coming of the last day and how things will look like before the day comes.

Step 3: Teacher carries out the “Jesus foretold the destruction of the Temple” activity with students and helps the students understand that the Temple will be destroyed on the last day.

- Teacher shows “PowerPoint 2” (A brief history of the Temple). Let the students know more about the materials used to build the Temple, as well as what the reconstruction of the Temple meant to the Jews at Jesus’ time.
- Teacher points out :
 - King Herod started to reconstruct the Temple before the era Jesus was born because he wanted the Jews to obey him. The main structure of the Temple was completed in 9 B.C. but the whole construction did not come into completion until A.D. 64.
- Teacher raises the questions :
 - Massive stones were the main construction material of the Temple. What would the Temple look like after it was completely built? Do you think it would be magnificent?
 - How would Jesus’ disciples (fishermen from the village Galilee) comment on the Temple?
 - How would Jesus comment on the Temple?
- Teacher asks the students to form groups of four and guides them to read Mark 13:1-2. Discuss Jesus’ and his disciples’ comments on the reconstruction of the Temple. Teacher leads the students to complete questions on “Worksheet 1” (Jesus’ prophecy about the destruction of the Temple).
 - How did Jesus’ disciples comment on the temple?
 - What was Jesus’ prophecy about the destiny of the Temple on the last day?
 - According to Jesus’ description and your own imagination, was the extent of destruction similar to that of the World Trade Centres? If not, can you describe it by using recent examples?
 - Under what circumstances would the Temple undergo such a disastrous destruction? Was it caused by earthquakes, wars or other factors?

- Why did Jesus foretell the disastrous destruction of the Temple in front of his disciples? Did he want to discuss the events in the future with them? Can you think of any other reasons?
- After discussion, teacher invites the students to present their ideas.

Step 4: Teacher goes further to discuss with students:

- If the Temple represented prosperity, then what was the message about the last day that Jesus had delivered to the disciples when he foretold the destruction of the Temple? (Teacher can explain to students that Jesus wanted the disciples to understand all things and greatness would be destroyed when the last day comes.)
- Why does Christianity relate the last day with disasters and serious destruction?
- Do you agree that people's perception of the last day in modern times is influenced by the Christian interpretation of such issue? Can you name some fictions or films which have related the last day with disasters and serious destruction?

Step 5: Teacher summarises :

- The Jews believed that the world was evil and must be destroyed before a new world could be re-created. They believed that only God will be able to destroy and renew the world. That day is called the Day of the Lord, or the last day.
- During Jesus' time, the Temple was regarded as one of the scenic wonders of the world. However, Jesus foretold that the Temple will be destructed in a big disaster.
- Jesus wanted to warn the disciples about the End of Days. When the last day comes, all prosperity and greatness will be destroyed.

Step 6: Teacher distributes Students' References: Material 1 (The Temple at Jesus' time) and Students' References: Material 2 (Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of the Temple), briefly explains it and wraps up the activity.

Activity Two

Enquiry Questions	Generic Skills	Values and Attitudes
Jesus reminded the disciples about the danger they would encounter during the End of Days.	problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills	objective and rational, critical thinking

Teaching Steps :**Step 1: Teacher raises the questions:**

- How would the disciples feel when they heard Jesus' prophecy about the serious destruction of the Temple on the last day? Would they be desperate, or shocked, or disoriented?
- When people are desperate, shocked and disoriented, what kind of social affairs will emerge?
- What should be avoided in such circumstances?
- Teacher carries out the "Emergence of rumours" activity with students. Let students understand that false messages will deceive people when the society is filled with desperation, shock and disorientation.
- Teacher raises the question :
 - Can you name some events or periods in which Hong Kong citizens were living in desperation, shock and disorientation? (e.g. the Financial Crisis, SARS etc.)
 - Can you recall what happened at that time? (Teacher reminds the students of the emergence of rumours; e.g. rice shortage in supermarkets, disinfection by steamed vinegar etc.)
 - Did people believe in those rumours and why? Was it because people lost their rationality in such circumstances?
 - Can you suggest some ways to help people resist believing in the rumours? Will early preparation work?

Step 2: Teacher points out :

- After Jesus foretold the coming of the last day and the destruction of the Temple, the disciples earnestly asked Jesus about when the day would come.
- Let us look at how Jesus answered them.

Step 3: Teacher carries out the “Jesus’ Proclamation” activity. Let the students understand that Jesus went further to teach the disciples about the last day and reminded them to watch out for the “false Christs”.

- Teacher asks the students to form groups of four and read Mark 13:3-6. Teacher hands out Worksheet 2 “Jesus’ proclamation” and leads the students to discuss the questions on the Worksheet:
 - According to the questions raised by the disciples, what did they expect Jesus to answer?
 - What was Jesus’ answer?
 - ✓ Do you think Jesus’ answer satisfied the disciples?
 - ✓ Do you think Jesus’ answer helped the disciples?
 - According to the above analysis, do you know why Jesus reminded the disciples to watch out for the “false Christs”?
 - What kind of actions do you think the “false Christs” would take on the last day? What would their motives be?
 - Do you think Jesus’ early reminder about the “false Christs” would help the disciples to remain faithful?
- After discussion, teacher invites the students to present their ideas.

Step 4: Teacher goes further to discuss with the students:

- Why didn’t Jesus answer the disciples about the time of the last day?
- Do you agree that Jesus’ reminder to the disciples about the danger they would encounter on the last day referred to being aware of the “false Christs” or the rumours?
- Can you name some rumours you have heard of nowadays?
- What do you think are the influences brought by rumours to a society and its people?

Step 5: Teacher summarises:

- After Jesus had foretold the destruction of the Temple on the last day, the disciples were concerned about when the day would come.
- Jesus did not tell them the exact date of the last day. He, however, reminded his disciples about the danger they would encounter on the last day, i.e. “false Christs” appearing. Jesus’ purpose was to protect his disciples, so that they would get prepared and equip themselves well.

Step 6: Teacher distributes “Students’ References: Material 3” (Jesus’ prophecy about the “false Christs” appearing), briefly explains it and wraps up the activity.

Activity Three

Enquiry Questions	Generic Skills	Values and Attitudes
How shall we cautiously identify the unhealthy religious organisations?	problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills	objective and rational, critical thinking

Teaching Steps :

Step 1: Teacher carries out the “Characteristics of unhealthy religious organisations” activity with students and leads them to identify the characteristics of unhealthy religious organisations.

- Teacher raises the question:
 - Nowadays, there are many prophecies about the end of the world. Are these ways to persuade people to believe in some religions? Are there any religious leaders claiming themselves to be “Christ” and that their appearance symbolises the coming of the last day? Can you identify these religions according to news sources and reports?
- Teacher points out :
 - Various religions emerge in today’s society. They can be categorised into two types, the constructive ones and the destructive ones.
 - New constructive religions mainly supplement the insufficiency of the traditional religion. Some may actively involve in social campaigns.
 - New destructive religions make use of people’s good will to benefit its chief leader. Some emerging religions collect wealth for their members illegally. Some indoctrinate deceptive beliefs and control the followers’ mind and behaviour, stressing on personal cult and gaining profit. Some even encourage the members to take destructive action towards the society and harm oneself. Therefore, it draws the attention of the traditional religion which considers some emerging religions as unhealthy religious organisations.
 - According to the information of the attached news-clip, why are young people willing to join the emerging religions?
- Teacher raises question:
 - Can you name some characteristics of the unhealthy religious organizations?

- Teacher asks the students to form groups of four and hands out Appendix 1 (Pana Wave Laboratory), Appendix 2 (Peoples Temple), Appendix 3 (Solar Temple) and Appendix 4 (Branch Davidian) to the students. Each group will be responsible for studying one material.
- Teacher asks the students to refer to “Students’ References: Material 4” and the appendixes. In accordance to the materials, list the characteristics of the unhealthy religious organizations and complete Worksheet 3 (The characteristics of unhealthy religious organisations).
- After discussion, teacher invites the students to present their ideas.

Step 2: Teacher carries out “True of False” activity and leads students to understand the characteristics of the unhealthy religious organisations.

- Teacher raises the question :
 - What do you think are the criteria that help us identify the unhealthy religious organisations?
- Teacher asks students to list the criteria on the board and asks the class to vote for the most important criterion.
- Teacher asks students to form groups of four and hands out “Students’ References: Material 4” (Identifying unhealthy religious organisations). Lead the students to discuss:
 - Compare the criteria you have suggested with those listed on the reference materials. What are the similarities and differences?
 - Do you agree that a faith group must have sufficient transparency over its rites and financial status? Why?
 - If a faith group does not have sufficient transparency over its rites and financial status, will you consider not joining this group? State the reasons.
 - What are the benefits brought to the society and its people when we are careful in differentiating whether some faith groups are unhealthy religious organisations?

Step 3: Teacher points out :

- An “unhealthy religion” means a religion which may bring harm to its members or the society.

- If we cannot decide instantly whether a faith group is unhealthy or not, we may take a look at its transparency. Beware of faith groups that restrict its members to contact the outside world or those which disconnect itself with the outside world.

Step 4: Teacher summarises :

- Jesus said that someone will claim themselves as Christ and deceive people during the End of Days. We must be careful not to be deceived by these rumours.
- Men must be cautious about messages delivered by different religions. They must learn to identify unhealthy religions in order to lead a healthy religious life.

Extended Activities :

1. Teacher asks students to collect information about a legal Christian organisation in Hong Kong. Analyse the information according to the following areas:
 - Religious ritual (frequency and content)
 - Financial status and management.
 - Dogma or Declaration of Faith.
 - Regular religious activities, e.g. small group meeting, frequency and content.
 - List of management committee members, monitoring system, etc.





Appendix 1: Pana Wave Laboratory

In May 2003, the police force in Japan was monitoring fifty members of a mysterious religious group. The group believed that the world would be seriously destroyed by a natural disaster on the 15th of that month. They camped along a highway, 274 kilometers west of Tokyo, and would move to another site on Monday evening.

Since the previous Saturday, the members of the claimed “Pana Wave Laboratory” started to camp along a mountain track at Gifu Prefecture, west Tokyo. They dressed in all white, claiming that the colour could resist the electromagnetic waves which had caused their sixty-nine-year-old leader severely sick. The spokesman of the group said that they would leave on Monday, but had not yet decided the next stop. The group had had a confrontation with the police for five days along a mountain highway in central Japan. They left the site only when the police denounced arrest. The group members attempted twice to find a new site but failed, so they resided along the desolated roadside. According to the information, the group had been wandering around the country for the last ten years.

According to news reports, the “white-robed cult” was a branch of a faith group thirty years ago. They believed that the north and south magnetic poles would swap on the 15th of May. It would cause tsunamis and earthquakes, causing a huge disaster (another saying was that the earth would be crashed by an unidentified star, thus causing the disaster). The spokesman of the group, wearing a white mask on Monday, made a brief declaration: those who did not listen would die. The media reported that the group had distributed a leaflet last year, claiming that if their leader died, they would kill all human beings. A group member told the media last week that a communist group was planning to kill their leader by using electromagnetic weapons. The member also claimed that the communist group acted according to the order of some politicians, including Junichiro Koizumi the prime minister. Television broadcast showed a fleet of eighteen vans parked along the highway and surrounded by white cloths. The police sent a team of two hundred and fifty to the site but did not take any action. Police spokesman said earlier that Pana Wave Laboratory was very similar to Supreme Truth, which attacked the Tokyo Subway by releasing poisoning sarin gas in 1995.

Reference:

<http://infoshare.icedsolo.com/NWO/heresy/h017.html>



Appendix 2: Peoples Temple

On the 18th November 1978, a tragedy in the tropical forest, Jonestown, Guyana, neighbour of Venezuela shocked the entire world. 912 people committed group suicide by drinking liquid cyanide. The victims were members of the Peoples Temple, a religious organisation led by Jim Jones.

Jim Jones, born as James Warren Jones, began to minister the Protestant Christians in the late 1940s. He mainly focused on helping the black people who lived in poverty. He got married in 1947 and became a full time pastor in the 1950s. After he was expelled from the Protestant church, he founded his own church and named it “Wings of Deliverance”, which was later renamed “The Peoples Temple”.

In 1970, Jones moved to San Francisco to call for more followers. In the early 1970s, he had already established many bases in the city. His followers passionately called him “father”. He began to preach extreme beliefs to his nationwide followers. Touring around the cities and giving speeches, he was armed and protected by bodyguards.

He proclaimed that he was God. He told his followers that he was their “father” as well as their “God”. No followers could object his will or he/she would be considered as a traitor. Every word from the followers of his church was to praise and glorify him. The “love” he proclaimed was later replaced by acute discipline and punishment. In addition, he seduced young and attractive female followers who trusted him so much. No women dared to resist. In fact, many chosen ones regarded it as an honour.

The matter drew the attention of some middle-class followers. Some followers began to disengage from his control and accused Jones of physical, psychological and sexual abuse. Therefore, the government sent officials to investigate the issue. In 1977, as a result of massive media reports and numerous lawsuits, Jones brought with him some 900 followers and moved to a forest in Guyana, South America. He established the Jonestown until 1978 when the tragedy happened.

In November 1978, Jones conducted a group suicide by ordering his followers to drink juices laced with cyanide and a number of sedatives. Those who refused would be shot, strangled or given cyanide injection. There were a total of 914 victims in the group suicide, including 276 children.

References:

1. <http://big5.fmprc.gov.cn/gate/big5/newyork.china-consulate.org/chn/xw/t29875.htm>
2. <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E5%9C%A3%E6%AE%BF%E6%95%99>



Appendix 3: Solar Temple

The Solar Temple was founded in around 1986. Its most senior leader was a Belgium called Luc Jouret. Jouret claimed to be a charismatic homeopathic therapist. He talked a lot about the end of the world and human souls going to heaven. He always imbued his followers with horrible scenes described in the Book of Revelation. The mysterious group established its base in France where it organised its activities. Its structure was meticulous. In the 90's of the 20th century, the group had organised group suicides in Switzerland, France and Canada respectively.

On the 5th October 1994, a group suicide with fifty-three victims was reported in two locations in Switzerland. Jouret was one of the victims. Nineteen bodies were arranged in the form of a star. Twenty people were shot, including six children. Clues indicated that the tragedy was a group suicide as well as a homicide organised by an unhealthy religious organisation in order to fulfill the prophecy about the end of the world. Those who did not want to die were shot dead. In December 1995, sixteen followers of the Solar Temple plotted a group suicide in the mountainous area of eastern France. In March 1997, five people, closely related to the group were found dead in St. Casimir, Quebec, Canada. A total of seventy-four people died in these three tragedies.

The Solar Temple believed that the star Sirius was the sanctuary of the gods. It convinced the followers that they would be linked to the gods by worshipping and repenting. Solar Temple talked a lot about the end of the world, saying that human beings would face a huge disaster. They claimed, for instance, the damage of the ozone layer, the spread of AIDS, the intensified racial conflicts, etc. signified the end of the world. The only way to be reborn was to surrender all earthly possessions and return to Sirius. When the followers were physically dead, their spirit would return to Sirius.

The structure of the Solar Temple was extremely meticulous. They honoured the most senior leader who controlled the mind and behaviour of the followers. All followers were anonymous. Internal ranking was strict, differentiating ministers and followers. The whole group was formed in a top-down structure. There was a headquarters, a subdivision and several branch offices. The highest leader of the church had absolute power over his followers. The followers had to declare their personal property, career, romance, etc. to the most senior leader. The leader manipulated the life and death of the followers and would exercise

physical punishment to them. Traitors would even be assassinated. The church would not accept just anybody to be its followers. They only chose people who were rich, well-educated, and with social status. The leader would ask the followers to pay a large amount of membership fee to show their loyalty. Some devoted followers would even sell their property and surrender a few hundred thousand dollars in cash to the leader. According to some sources, the cash rendered to the group was approximately a hundred million. The group also smuggled weapons to earn huge profits.

References:

1. http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-70-501/disasters_tragedies/solar_temple/
2. <http://www.jsrd.gov.cn/jsrdportal/html/1/1341/13581.shtml>
3. <http://big5.fmprc.gov.cn/gate/big5/newyork.china-consulate.org/chn/xw/t29875.htm>



Appendix 4: Branch Davidian

Branch Davidian, founded in 1934 in America, was an organisation advocating the end of the world. David Koresh (born as Vernon Howell) became the group leader in 1987 and made the group into an extreme religious organisation. As the leader, he asserted absolute power over the followers, declaring himself as the new Jesus Christ. He even considered himself having a higher status than Jesus. Thus, he renamed himself David Koresh (David was the ancestor of Jesus) in 1990, leading a life as if he was the saviour. He exercised military control and economic exploitation, asking the followers to live in an isolated community, forcing them to make lengthy prayers every day and brainwashing them with the idea of the end of the world. He claimed that people could only be saved by following him when the end of the world came.

Koresh regarded himself as the god of the church and meticulously controlled the followers. After the followers joined the group, they had to render their salaries and savings to the leader. They were not allowed to watch television and communicate with the outside world. He asked the followers to control their sexual desire. However, he claimed that he was authorised by God to manipulate the sexual lives of the followers. He was the only one who had the right to have sex with any woman. He had nineteen wives and had numerous sexual relationships with the female followers, including the wives of the male followers. Among these women, the youngest was only twelve years old. Most female followers who had relationships with him did not hate him, but regarded it as an honour.

In accordance with the Book of Revelation and Daniel (two books in the Holy Bible), Koresh proclaimed that the end of the world was coming. Different countries in the world would fight against each other in Jerusalem. America would also invade Jerusalem and attack the Branch Davidian, the chosen people of God. However, as a warrior, Koresh would win eventually and bring along all saints to heaven. They would enjoy the peace in the millennium. In light of this, Branch Davidian stockpiled a large quantity of weapons and food that would be enough for them to survive a few years in order to resist the attack by the “anti-Christ”. The leader also put his followers into military training. Either men or women, including the elderly, had to get up at five thirty in the morning to receive training. However, Koresh slept until noon every day.

When the police discovered Koresh’s crimes, including his possession of weapons and assault on women, Koresh felt threatened and thus foretold a battle in Texas.

When the National Army invaded, the followers ought to protect their manor and wait for the coming of the last day. The leader made his followers believe that the National Army was manipulated by Satan and those who fought with their lives would resurrect and go to heaven. The message greatly influenced the followers, leading to a tragedy.

On the 28th February 1993, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) of the U.S. besieged Mount Carmel after collecting evidence that the Branch Davidian stockpiled a large amount of weapons. Koresh was arrested and a firefight broke out. Thereafter, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) took over the case and sent a troop of 450 armed police, tens of armoured cars, tanks and helicopters, and continued to besiege the manor. Moreover, water and electricity supply was suspended. Until the 19th April of the same year, not one single follower surrendered in the fifty-one-day raid. Afterthat, the FBI invaded the manor with tanks and released tear gas. The manor caught fire immediately and was burnt into ashes. The entire site was destroyed in a moment. Except nine, eighty-six people, including Koresh were killed. Some survivors even tried to kill themselves by running back into the fire.

Today, the headquarters of Branch Davidian in Waco has been demolished. However, there are still many Davidians all round the world, mainly in America and Britain. They think the death of Koresh is exactly the same as that of Jesus, and are waiting for his resurrection.

Reference:

<http://www.mingjing.org.cn/xgts/flgyxj/Part4/261.htm>



Material 1: The Temple at Jesus' time

Time and place of construction

- King Herod began to reconstruct the Temple before Christ was born. The main reason was to win the allegiance of the Jews. The structure of the Temple was completed in 9 B.C. but the whole building did not come into completion until A.D. 64.
- Historian Josephus said that some stones of the Temple were forty feet long, twelve feet tall and eighteen feet wide. Disciples from Galilee were astonished by its magnificence.
- The Temple was built on Mount Moriah. Huge stone walls were built on the ridge in all directions, forming a wide platform.

Characteristics of the construction

- The main entrance of the Temple was on the southwestern side. The road to townships was blocked by the Tyropoeon Valley. A bridge was built to link up the two valleys.
- The arch of the bridge was forty-one and a half feet long. The length of the stone used to build the bridge was twenty-four feet long. The bridge was three hundred and fifty-four feet long and fifty feet wide. It extended straight to the opposite valley.
- The bridge extended from the Royal Porch of the Temple. The Porch was also magnificently built. Corinthian cylinders were found on both sides to support the bridge. Made of unique marble stone, each cylinder was thirty-seven and a half feet tall.
- The Temple was gilded. Historian Josephus said, "Every man will be attracted by the gorgeous structure of the Temple. When the sun rises from the east, the gold leaf reflects the light and shines as if it were the sun. Men are not able to look at it directly. If the Temple is seen from a distance, it looks as if it were coated by snow." The white exterior of the Temple was forty-five cubits long, five cubits tall and six cubits wide.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press. pp.317-323.



Material 2: Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of the Temple

The last day and the destruction

- The Jews never doubted their identity as the chosen people of God. They believed that after a certain period of time, they would rule over the land because of their status and the right of being God's chosen people. They had already given up using men's power to regain sovereignty. They thought God would come on earth again and they called it "The Day of the Lord".
- Before the day came, there would be a time of trouble and dismay. The entire world would be shaken and at the same time, judgment would be carried out.
- From a certain perspective, the belief which the Jews had, that God would come again, was an unbeatable optimism. However, when looking from another perspective, it revealed their vulnerable and pessimistic characters. They thought the world was extremely bad and must be destroyed in order to recreate a new one. They did not seek other alternatives but insisted on letting God to do the recreation.

The Temple of the first century was destructed

- The Jesuit scholars pointed out that Jesus foretold the destruction of the Temple as mentioned in Mark 2:2. His prophecy was fulfilled in the first century after Jesus was born.
- In A.D. 40, the Roman King Caligula noticed that the Jewish Temple had no gods. He tried to place his own statue into the Temple. His officials strongly advised him not to do so because such action would be opposed by the Jews.
- The king persisted. He died in A.D. 41. Fortunately, during his reign, the Temple remained in good conditions.
- However, in A.D. 70, Roman General Titus brought a troop of soldiers to besiege Jerusalem. The Jews thrived in water shortage and famine. Nevertheless, the Roman army won the battle and took over Jerusalem. The Temple was destructed.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press. pp. 317-323.



Material 3: Jesus' prophecy about the appearance of false Christs

Jesus knew that some false Christs would appear before the last day came. Two main reasons were:

- A person always justifies his/her own creed: it is possible that every man will distort the truth of Christianity so as to match his/her personal bias. For instance, shall we leave discussing the matters about the creed of hell and the second coming of Christ just because it is perplexing?
- Men are sometimes stubborn and tend to exaggerate. For instance, men should not have bias towards God's character. If we over-emphasise God's holiness, we may find it difficult to maintain a close relationship with Him. As a result, God becomes distant from us. If we over-emphasise God's righteousness, we shall live in fear and will become shackled.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press. pp.317-323.



Material 4: Identification of unhealthy religious organisation

Characteristics of unhealthy religious organisations

“Unhealthy religious organisation” here means a religion which may harm the society and its members. (Some small-scaled faith groups with no destructive behaviour can be considered as constructive religions.)

Some scholars did research and concluded that these organisations have strong emphasis on the following aspects:

1. The coming of the last day: leaders of the religion strongly emphasise the impending end of the world. Followers are taught that group suicide will bring them to a beautiful and safe sphere in a blink. They can also escape from the devastation at the end of the world.
2. Prestigious status: on the last day, members of the religion will possess prestigious status.
3. Absolute power of the leader: the religion has a leader (usually a male) who controls the mind, behaviour, physical body, sex, emotions, etc. of the members with absolute power. (*refer to additional materials attached*)
4. Solitary: members form a unique community, hiding from the main stream society.
5. Isolation: members are strictly forbidden to have contact with the main stream society. There is absolute disconnection between the community and the outside world.
6. Extreme paranoia: members always feel like living in an unsafe environment. They are paranoid of being oppressed cruelly by the government or the society.
7. Possession of dangerous materials: the religion possesses large quantity of guns, drugs, offensive weapons or other weapons for mass destruction.

It is possible that some of the above characteristics might be found in legitimate religions, e.g. male leader. However, in legitimate religions, the extent of their aggressiveness is far less than that of the unhealthy religions. Therefore, if a certain religion possesses the above characteristics, it does not necessarily mean that the religion is unhealthy. But if that religion possesses a lot of characteristics listed above, its chance of being an unhealthy religion is great.

Reference:

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/cultsign.htm>

The control imposed by the unhealthy religious organisations to the followers :

2. Behavioural control

- a. Residence, family, house-mates, friends are restricted.
- b. Clothing, appearance is restricted.
- c. Food is restricted.
- d. Rest time is restricted.
- e. Time and space to leisure are restricted.
- f. Occupies the member's large amount of time by infusing faith creed and church activities.
- g. Approval is needed for every decision.
- h. Thoughts, emotions and actions must be reported to the authorised of the faith group.
- i. Collective thinking is superior to personal thinking.
- j. Members must rely on and obey the faith group leader.

3. Information control

- a. Information circulation is strictly controlled and rarely open to the followers. Only a few members of higher status know about the facts and accurate information.
- b. Prevent members from accessing information from outside the faith group, including criticisms rendered to the faith group. Exhaust the members with everyday work so as to avoid them contacting the outside world.
- c. Generate a confronting situation between "insiders" and "outsiders". The group leader controls the information flow.
- d. Encourage accusations among the members and form a buddy system.
- e. Extensively promote and implement the creed and the messages declared by the faith group.
- f. Immorally make use of members' past misconducts and confessions as threats.

3. Mind control

- a. Define the creed as “the truth” and have very extreme differentiation between right or wrong, good or evil, “insider” or “outsider”.
- b. Make use of special languages to replace the normal pattern of thinking.
- c. Only “good” and “correct” ideas are allowed.
- d. Suppress the followers — only “good” ideas are allowed. Critical and rational mindsets are forbidden. Day-dreaming, meditating; praying, singing special hymns and speaking special languages are encouraged.
- e. The leader or the creed should never be criticised.
- f. Other religions will never be accepted.

4. Emotional control

- a. Control people's emotions.
- b. Believe that all mistakes originate from oneself but never the leader.
- c. Guilt is exaggerated.
- d. Fear is exaggerated — the fear of being independent; of contacting the “outside” world; of facing the enemies; of losing salvation; of leaving the faith group; and of being rejected.
- e. Exercise extensive emotional stimulus to control people.
- f. Public confession.
- g. Irrational fear — fear of the leader, of leaving, and of not finding happiness outside the group. Therefore, one cannot leave the group because it will bring misfortune. Those who leave are said to be corrupted and they will be boycotted.

Reference:

Hassan, Steve (2000) . *Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves*. Danbury : Aitan.

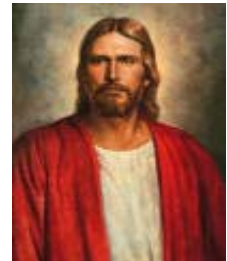
Worksheet 1: Jesus and his disciples talking about the Temple

Read Mark 13: 1-2 and the comments given by Jesus and his disciples on the reconstruction of the Temple as listed. Fill in the blanks below.



1. How did the disciples of Jesus comment on the Temple?

2. What was Jesus' prophecy about the destiny of the Temple on the last day?



3. According to Jesus' description and your own imagination, was the extent of destruction similar to that of the World Trade Centres? If not, how would you describe it by using recent examples?

4. Under what circumstances would the Temple undergo such a disastrous destruction? Would it be destroyed by earthquakes, wars or any other factors?

5. Why did Jesus foretell the disastrous destruction of the Temple in front of the disciples? Did he want to discuss with them the events in the future?

Worksheet 2: Jesus' proclamation

Read Mark 13:3-6 and answer the following questions.



1. According to the questions raised by the disciples, what did they expect Jesus to answer?

2. In response to the questions raised by the disciples about the prophecy of the last day, what was Jesus' answer?



3. Do you think Jesus' answer satisfied the disciples? Do you think Jesus' answer helped the disciples to get well-prepared for the last day?

4. According to the above analysis, do you know why Jesus reminded the disciples to watch out for the "false Christs"?

5. What kind of actions do you think the "false Christs" would take on the last day? What do you think their motives were?

6. Do you think the Jesus' reminder about the appearance of the "false Christ" helped the disciples to remain faithful?

Worksheet 3: The characteristics of unhealthy religious organisations

Read the materials about religious organisations. List some characteristics of unhealthy religious organisations.

The characteristics of unhealthy religious organisations

The message proclaimed :

The status of the leader :

The command to the followers :

The followers' understanding to the society :



Material 1: The Temple at Jesus' time

Time and place of construction

- King Herod began to reconstruct the Temple before Christ was born. The main reason was to win the allegiance of the Jews. The structure of the Temple was completed in 9 B.C. but the whole building did not come into completion until A.D. 64.
- Historian Josephus said that some stones of the Temple were forty feet long, twelve feet tall and eighteen feet wide. Disciples from Galilee were astonished by its magnificence.
- The Temple was built on Mount Moriah. Huge stone walls were built on the ridge in all directions, forming a wide platform.

Characteristics of the construction

- The main entrance of the Temple was on the southwestern side. The road to townships was blocked by the Tyropoeon Valley. A bridge was built to link up the two valleys.
- The arch of the bridge was forty-one and a half feet long. The length of the stone used to build the bridge was twenty-four feet long. The bridge was three hundred and fifty-four feet long and fifty feet wide. It extended straight to the opposite valley.
- The bridge extended from the Royal Porch of the Temple. The Porch was also magnificently built. Corinthian cylinders were found on both sides to support the bridge. Made of unique marble stone, each cylinder was thirty-seven and a half feet tall.
- The Temple was gilded. Historian Josephus said, "Every man will be attracted by the gorgeous structure of the Temple. When the sun rises from the east, the gold leaf reflects the light and shines as if it were the sun. Men are not able to look at it directly. If the Temple is seen from a distance, it looks as if it were coated by snow." The white exterior of the Temple was forty-five cubits long, five cubits tall and six cubits wide.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press.
pp.317-323.



Material 2: Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of the Temple

The last day and the destruction

- The Jews never doubted their identity as the chosen people of God. They believed that after a certain period of time, they would rule over the land because of their status and the right of being God's chosen people. They had already given up using men's power to regain sovereignty. They thought God would come on earth again and they called it "The Day of the Lord".
- Before the day came, there would be a time of trouble and dismay. The entire world would be shaken and at the same time, judgment would be carried out.
- From a certain perspective, the belief which the Jews had, that God would come again, was an unbeatable optimism. However, when looking from another perspective, it revealed their vulnerable and pessimistic characters. They thought the world was extremely bad and must be destroyed in order to recreate a new one. They did not seek other alternatives but insisted on letting God to do the recreation.

The Temple of the first century was destructed

- The Jesuit scholars pointed out that Jesus foretold the destruction of the Temple as mentioned in Mark 2:2. His prophecy was fulfilled in the first century after Jesus was born.
- In A.D. 40, the Roman King Caligula noticed that the Jewish Temple had no gods. He tried to place his own statue into the Temple. His officials strongly advised him not to do so because such action would be opposed by the Jews.
- The king persisted. He died in A.D. 41. Fortunately, during his reign, the Temple remained in good conditions.
- However, in A.D. 70, Roman General Titus brought a troop of soldiers to besiege Jerusalem. The Jews thrived in water shortage and famine. Nevertheless, the Roman army won the battle and took over Jerusalem. The Temple was destructed.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press. pp. 317-323.



Material 3: Jesus' prophecy about the appearance of false Christs

Jesus knew that some false Christs would appear before the last day came. Two main reasons were:

- A person always justifies his/her own creed: it is possible that every man will distort the truth of Christianity so as to match his/her personal bias. For instance, shall we leave discussing the matters about the creed of hell and the second coming of Christ just because it is perplexing?
- Men are sometimes stubborn and tend to exaggerate. For instance, men should not have bias towards God's character. If we over-emphasise God's holiness, we may find it difficult to maintain a close relationship with Him. As a result, God becomes distant from us. If we over-emphasise God's righteousness, we shall live in fear and will become shackled.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press. pp.317-323.



Material 4: Identification of unhealthy religious organisations

Characteristics of unhealthy religious organisations

“Unhealthy religious organisation” here means a religion which may harm the society and its members. (Some small-scaled faith groups with no destructive behaviour can be considered as constructive religions.)

Some scholars did research and concluded that these organisations have strong emphasis on the following aspects:

1. The coming of the last day: leaders of the religion strongly emphasise the impending end of the world. Followers are taught that group suicide will bring them to a beautiful and safe sphere in a blink. They can also escape from the devastation at the end of the world.
2. Prestigious status: on the last day, members of the religion will possess prestigious status.
3. Absolute power of the leader: the religion has a leader (usually a male) who controls the mind, behaviour, physical body, sex, emotions, etc. of the members with absolute power. (*refer to additional materials attached*)
4. Solitary: members form a unique community, hiding from the main stream society.
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- d. Rest time is restricted.
- e. Time and space to leisure are restricted.
- f. Occupies the member's large amount of time by infusing faith creed and church activities.
- g. Approval is needed for every decision.
- h. Thoughts, emotions and actions must be reported to the authorised of the faith group.
- i. Collective thinking is superior to personal thinking.
- j. Members must rely on and obey the faith group leader.

2 Information control

- a. Information circulation is strictly controlled and rarely open to the followers. Only a few members of higher status know about the facts and accurate information.
- b. Prevent members from accessing information from outside the faith group, including criticisms rendered to the faith group. Exhaust the members with everyday work so as to avoid them contacting the outside world.
- c. Generate a confronting situation between "insiders" and "outsiders". The group leader controls the information flow.
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- f. Public confession.
- g. Irrational fear — fear of the leader, of leaving, and of not finding happiness outside the group. Therefore, one cannot leave the group because it will bring misfortune. Those who leave are said to be corrupted and they will be boycotted.

Reference:

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Danbury : Aitan.

Period 2: No one knows about that day

1. Biblical reference: Mark 13:32-37

2. Objectives:

- To understand the sign of the coming of the Kingdom of heaven is that no one will know about that day.
- To learn the parable of the Watchful Porter. An owner of the house left home for a journey and gave his servant authorities and their own duties. The parable reminds people to be alert.
- To understand that we have to be alert when facing the uncertain future.



3. Teaching strategies

Background Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one knows when Jesus Christ will come again, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son himself. Only the Father knows. • Since no one knows about that day, Jesus told a parable of the Watchful Porter. He used it to remind people to be alert. • Jesus thought that although people were not sure about when the end of the days would come, it was still necessary to be alert.
Issues for Explorations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of attitude should people have when facing the uncertain future?
Enquiry Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did Jesus think the last day would come? • What did Jesus teach us about facing the uncertain future? • Will our decision today influence the uncertain future?
Learning Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show the students some movie clips and let them think about when the end of the world will be. Also, tell the students to read the Bible to find out more about how Jesus talked about the end of the world. • With reference to the Chinese reader 《從 8A 開始》 and the experience of Hong Kong citizens during the period when our city was struck by SARS in 2003, guide the students to understand Jesus' parable of the Watchful Porter. Let the students think about the correct attitude to deal with the uncertain future.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through daily examples, guide the students to think whether our decisions today will influence the uncertain future.
Key Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The last day To be alert
Generic skills, values and attitudes involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to 'Generic Skills, Values and Attitudes' tables included in the corresponding lesson plans.
High-order Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will our decision today influence the uncertain future?
Extended Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do research and compare how different religions guide their believers to face the uncertain future.

Activity One



Enquiry Question	Generic Skills	Values and Attitudes
When did Jesus think the last day will come?	Problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills	Sanctity of life, truth, betterment of humankind

Teaching steps:**Step 1: Teacher involves students in preparation work. Lets students think about what attitude people should have towards the future.**

- Teacher shows “Presentation One” (The Great Prophet?) with photos of famous feng shui masters in Hong Kong, including Peter So Man-fung, Mak Ling-ling and Lee Shing-chak, etc. Check how familiar the students are with them. Then discuss with the students:
 - Why are the above-mentioned feng shui masters so popular?
 - What drives people to ask the masters about their future? (Teacher can guide the students to understand that people’s anxiety about the unknown future makes them want to know more about it.)
 - What are people’s attitudes towards the future? Do they want to know it badly, do they not care about it, or do they remain alert to prepare for it? Are there any other reasons?

Step 2: Teacher points out:

- During the last period, we read about Jesus foretelling the scenes on the last day (the Temple being destroyed) and the danger the disciples would face (the appearance of false Christs). Later, was Jesus willing to tell his disciples when the last day would be?
- If Jesus did not tell his disciples when exactly the last day would be, what attitude should his disciples have when facing the coming of that day?

Step 3: Teacher carries out “Coming of the last day” activity. Let students learn about when the last day will come according to Jesus and some scientists respectively.

- Teacher asks:
 - In contemporary world, have any one predicted when the last day will come?
 - Do you know when the scientists think the last day will come?

- Teacher shows excerpts of the movie “An Inconvenient Truth”, including scenes of glaciers melting, hurricanes, floods and droughts etc, and guides the students (1) to imagine the situations when the last day is coming, and (2) to understand when the scientists think the last day will come.
- Teacher asks:
 - Do you agree with the scientists’ prediction about the time of the last day?
How did Jesus comprehend the time of the last day?
- Teacher asks students to form groups of four and read Mark 13:32-37. Teacher guides the students to discuss questions on “Worksheet One” (The time of the last day):
 - What event does “that day or hour will come” refer to?
 - When did Jesus think the Lord would come back for judgment? Could this day be reckoned? Why?
 - Jesus did not know when the Lord would come back for judgment. Does this surprise you?
- After discussion, teacher invites students to present their ideas.

Step 4: Teacher goes further to discuss with students:

- Why didn’t Jesus enquire about the exact time of the last day? What do you think?
- Do you think anyone in the modern world still cares about the time of the last day? Why does such phenomenon occur?
- Will concerns about the time of the last day affect people’s attitude towards life? Explain with examples.

Step 5: Teacher summarises:

- “That day or hour will come” refers to the day God comes back to the earth for judgment, i.e. the end of the world or the last day.
- Nevertheless, Jesus admitted that he did not know the exact day and time when God would come back for judgment. Neither the angels nor Jesus knew about the day and time. Only God knows.
- Jesus did not enquire the exact day and hour when God would come back for judgment, showing that he preferred to hand these matters in God’s hands.

Step 6: Teacher distributes “Students’ Reference: Material One” (Events and time of the last day) and briefly sums up the above activity.

Activity Two



Enquiry Question	Generic Skills	Values and Attitudes
What did Jesus teach his people about facing the uncertain future?	Problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills	Being cautious and alert, self-reflection, being positive

Step 1: Teacher carries out “How to face the uncertain future” activity and guides students to think about what attitudes people should have in facing the uncertain future.

- Teacher asks students to form groups of four and distributes “Worksheet 2” (Facing changes) or “Worksheet 3” (Facing SARS). Teacher guides the students to answer questions on the worksheet according to the activities below chosen by the teacher:
- Option One: From the reader 《從 8A 開始》 (Breakthrough Publisher, 2005), select five cases, including those of a pastor, a doctor, a lawyer’s wife, a banker and a professor. Each group of students studies one case and completes “Worksheet 2” (Facing changes) by reviewing:
 - What kind of future is she/he facing?
 - Can the person predict that she/he will have such a future?
 - What attitude do they have facing the uncertain future?
 - Is it good for the person to face the uncertain future with such an attitude? Why?
- Option Two: If the teacher cannot find a copy of the above reader, the following activity can be done.
 - Teacher shows “PowerPoint 2” (Reflection on SARS), or simply states that when Hong Kong citizens were going through SARS, they were facing an uncertain future. Many people had significant reflection and had the following four major attitudes: (1) some volunteered to help patients in high-risk wards, feared not to sacrifice themselves; (2) some cared more about their health; (3) some cared more about family relationships; and (4) some became indulgent in having fun, preferring to enjoy life while they could.
 - Teacher asks the students to complete “Worksheet 3” (Facing SARS) after watching the presentation, and analyse:
 - Did Hong Kong citizens accurately predict the coming of SARS?

- When Hong Kong citizens were facing SARS and the unknown future, which of the above attitude was the most popular?
- If Hong Kong has to face another extensive spread of virus, what attitude do you think Hong Kong people should have in order to deal with the uncertain future? Why do you suggest such attitude?
- Teacher invites students to present after discussion.
- Teacher points out:
 - When facing the unknown future, people usually have three attitudes: (1) keep relying on predictions; (2) pay no attention to it; and (3) remain alert and be prepared.

Step 2: Teacher carries out “Jesus teaches people to face the unknown future” activity, lets students understand the attitude recommended by Jesus for us to face the unknown future.

- Teacher asks:
 - Since Jesus admitted directly that he did not know the exact day and time of God’s judgment, what do you think Jesus would teach people about facing the unknown future?
- Teacher points out:
 - Jesus made use of the parable of the Watchful Porter to teach people what kind of attitude they should have when facing the unknown future.
- Teacher asks students to form groups of four and gives each group one “Worksheet 4” (The parable of the gone-away master). With reference to Mark 13: 32-38, discuss the questions on the worksheet:
 - What the master and the servants have done respectively;
 - The meaning of the symbols and the lesson in the parable.
- Teacher invites students to report the results of their discussion after completing the worksheet.

Step 3: Teacher goes further to discuss with the students :

- Jesus thought that facing the uncertain time of the last day, people should not always ask about the exact time. Instead, they should remain alert in their daily lives. Do you agree with Jesus’ teaching? Why?
- What kind of attitude will you have when facing the uncertain future? (Teacher can use different examples to help the students think.)

- For instance, during examinations, we come across a lot of uncertainties. We are not sure about which questions the teacher will ask, about the marking scheme, about how much the exam results will affect our future. Which of the attitudes will you have: (1) rely on making predictions and keep on searching for methods to deal with the examinations, expecting perfect accuracy; (2) pay no attention to it and will not prepare for the examination; (3) remain alert and be prepared, concentrate in regular revisions and deal with the exams positively
-

Step 4: Teacher summarises:

- For the short parable Jesus uses in Mark 13: 34-36, some scholars stated that the “master” represents Jesus Christ. The master “left home for a journey” refers to Jesus leaving the earth and going back to heaven. “Put his servants in charge telling the doorkeeper to keep watch” shows that Jesus wanted the followers to remain alert and faithful, and to pray more.
- The meaning of the parable as a whole is that Jesus would be crucified. After he has resurrected and rose to heaven, he gave his disciples authority to serve and witness him. Everyone should fulfill his own duties and wait for the Lord to come back. We should not become slack by thinking that the Lord has not been back yet.
- The parable Jesus spoke of in Mark 13: 34-36 taught people to remain alert in their daily life. Remaining alert does not mean living with fear and being so absorbed in the unknown future. Trying our best to fulfill our own duties every day is good enough.
- It is for sure that when Jesus comes back he will bring with him grace as gifts. We should be alert and well-prepare, so as to welcome Jesus with joy just like what children usually do when they are waiting for the presents from Santa Claus.
- “Remaining alert” refers to being cautious about changes in life from time to time. The coming back of Jesus gives us clear directions for life. We should cooperate with God as if we were the doorkeeper in the parable. He does not know when his master is coming back. But he prepares himself well to welcome that day. The responsible doorkeeper also makes conscious use of his abilities given by God to fulfill his duties and seizes the moment.

Step 5: Teacher distributes “Students’ reference: Material Two” (To live with alertness) and briefly explains to sum up the above activity.

Activity Three



Enquiry Question	Generic Skills	Values and Attitudes
Will our decision today influence the unknown future?	Problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills	Being positive, courage, confidence and hope

Teaching steps:**Step 1: Teacher asks:**

- Do you think the future is certain or uncertain?
- Do you think that our decision today will influence the unknown future?

Step 2: Teacher carries out the “Decisions today decide tomorrow” activity, guides students to think about whether decisions today will influence the future.

- Teacher logs on to the following website, let the students watch the clip and discuss with the students:
 - The Beginning & The End, <Seeking you II>, Volume 5: A sheep (Hong Kong Diocesan Audio-Visual Centre, 25 minutes):
http://www.hkdavc.com/seeking2/seeking2_05.html
 - (Summary: Cheung Man-tat received a sentence for life imprisonment because of murder. He found his faith in prison. He worked hard and completed an undergraduate degree. Although he would be imprisoned for a life time, he had hope and faith. He read and studied to see if he would have the chance to make contributions to the society.)
- Teacher and students discuss:
 - As a prisoner sentenced for life imprisonment, Cheung Man-tat was facing an uncertain future (possible spending his whole life in prison). What decision did he make?
 - Would Cheung Man-tat’s decision influence his uncertain future? Was the influence good or bad?

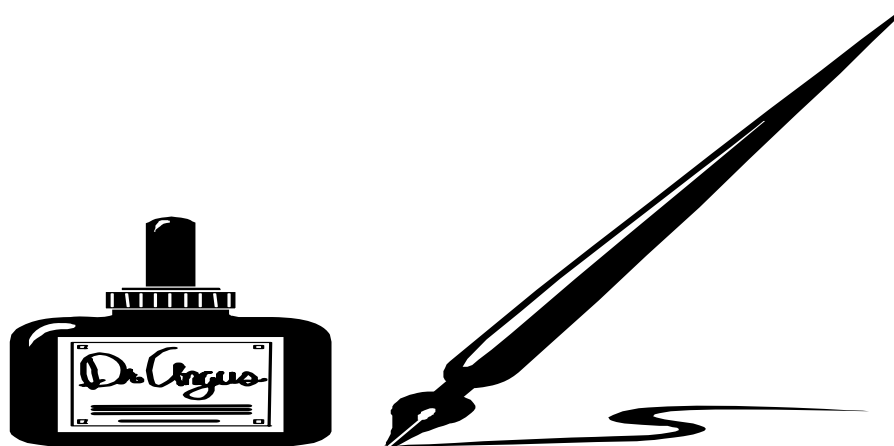
Step 3: Teacher summarises:

- Even though we may sometimes face an uncertain future, our decisions today are very important as they will influence our future.

- Let us learn to make our everyday decisions with alert, just like what Jesus taught in Mark 13: 34-36. Although we do not know the exact date of the last day, Jesus wanted us to put our future into God's hands. The first coming of Jesus was a piece of good news to the mankind. How can his second coming be the scary end of the human history as stated by some rumourmongers? It should be a piece of joyful news instead. What people need to do is to be alert towards the last day. This is something for sure we can do.

Extended Activities:

1. Teacher asks students to look into some media sources such as books and the Internet. Find out the viewpoints of different religions on the uncertain future. Students can choose two or more religions to make comparison.
2. Teacher asks students to refer to the following questions, to help them make comparison among the religions:
 - How does it describe the believers' conditions of life on earth?
 - How does it guide the believers to deal with the hardship, uncertainties and suffering in life?
 - How does it guide the believers to deal with emotions such as anxiety, fear and insecurity as a result of worrying about the future?
 - What attitude should the believers have when facing the uncertain future as guided by the religion?
 - What are the most important qualities such as values, personalities and attitudes advocated in helping people face the future?
 - What methods does it provide to help believers hold the above attitude?
3. Teacher asks students to share the result of their research in the next period.
4. Students can refer to the following websites:
www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/TC/Content_6072/suffering_lo_ping_cheung.doc
<http://iwr.cass.cn/>
<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%95%91%E8%B4%96%E8%AB%96>
<http://astrology.fightclub.com.pk/text/t-159911-p-1.html>





Material 1: Events during the End of Days and the time of the last day

Events during the End of Days

- Jesus told his disciples about things that would happen during the End of Days (Mark 13:7-12), saying that there would be wars, disasters, earthquakes and famines in many places.
- The faith of the believers would be challenged. They would even be beaten up, and family members would betray each other because of the loss of faith.

Time of the last day

- When everyone was curious about when the last day would be, Jesus said clearly, “No one knows, however, when that day or hour will come — neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; only the Father knows.” (Mark 13:32)
- Jesus had admitted directly that he did not know the exact day of God’s judgment and when he himself would be back.
- Jesus preferred to leave certain matters in God’s hands without enquiring. It reminds us that it is unnecessary for people to predict the day and time of the end of the world and to know when Jesus will be back. Isn’t it any difference from blasphemy if men try so hard looking for answers on matters that even Jesus was content with not knowing? Thus, we should follow Jesus, being content with not knowing the time of the end of the world.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press.
pp.336-337.



Material 2: To live with alertness

Jesus used a parable (Mark 13: 34-36) to explain the attitude people should have when facing the unknown future.

- **The meaning of the roles and situations in the parable**

- “Master”: represents Jesus Christ
- “Leaving his house for a far journey”: refers to Jesus leaving the earth and going back to heaven.
- “Giving authority to his servants... commanding the porter to watch” refers to Jesus wanting the followers to pray and be alert and faithful on earth.

- **The meaning and lesson of the parable**

At that time, the disciples would think that the parable illustrated them as the servants waiting for their master. They knew that the master would be back but they did not know when. Later, Jesus was crucified. He then resurrected and rose to heaven. He gave his disciples authority to serve and witness him. Everyone should fulfill his own duties and wait for the Lord to come back. We should not be slack by think that the Lord is not yet back.

- **From the parable: insight to modern people's attitude towards life**

The parable teaches us to live with alertness. Being alert does not mean living in fear. Instead, it is good enough to try our best to fulfill our duties every day. If the follower is a loyal servant, leading an alert and pious life, when the Christ comes back will not bother him/her. We should be virtuous and alert at all times so that we are well-prepared to welcome Jesus Christ at any moment with ease.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press.
pp.336-337.

Worksheet 4: The parable of the Watchful Porter (Suggested answers)

According to the parable in Mark 13: 32-37, answer the following questions.



1. Write down the actions of the master and the servants in the parable:

Actions of the master	Actions of the servants
What are the master's actions in the parable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left home for a far journey • Gave authority to his servants; gave each servant his own work to do 	What are the actions that the servants have to take in the parable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be alert and work hard

2. Find out the meaning of the following roles and situations in the parable.

Symbols in the parable	Meaning of the symbols
Master (Who does the "master" refer to?)	Jesus Christ
The master leaving home for a far journey (What does this matter refer to?)	Jesus leaving the earth and went back to heaven
Servants (Who do the "servants" refer to?)	The followers on earth
The servants working hard with alertness (What does working hard and being alert refer to?)	While waiting for the last day to come, followers should lead an alert and pious life. They should try their best to fulfill their duties and be faithful, waiting for Jesus to come back.

Worksheet 1: The time of the last day

Answer the following questions according to Mark 13: 32-37 and the previous presentations.



Prediction of the last
day

1. What event does “that day or hour will come” refer to?

2. When did Jesus think will be the day that the Lord comes back for judgment?

AD _____ Year _____ Month _____ Day

3. Can the day that the Lord comes back for judgment be predicted? Why?

4. Jesus did not know when the Lord will come back for judgment. Does it surprise you?

Worksheet 2: Facing changes

A. Study the characters in 《從 8A 開始》 and fill in the form below:

Interview with People Facing Changes

1. Person being studied: _____

2. Occupation: _____

3. What kind of future is he facing?

4. Could he predict having such a future?

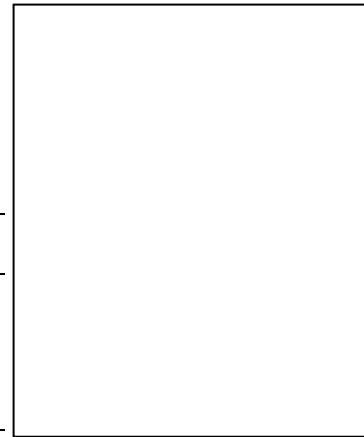


Photo of the interviewee

5. What attitude does he have when facing the uncertain future?

6. Is it good for him to face the uncertain future with such an attitude? Why?

Worksheet 3: Facing SARS

Answer the following questions.



http://www.ha.xinhuanet.com/yincang/2003-04/18/content_409051.htm

Four major attitudes when facing SARS:

- a. Some volunteered to help patients in high-risk wards, not fearing to sacrifice themselves.
- b. Some cared more about their health.
- c. Some cared more about family relationships.
- d. Some became indulgent in having fun, preferring to enjoy life while they can.

1. Did Hong Kong citizens accurately predict the coming of SARS?

2. When Hong Kong citizens were facing SARS and the uncertain future, which of the above attitude was the most popular? Explain.

3. If Hong Kong has to face another extensive spread of virus, what attitude do you think Hong Kong citizens should have when facing the uncertain future? Explain.

Worksheet 4: The parable of the Watchful Porter

According to the parable in Mark 13:32-37, answer the following questions.



1. Write down the actions of the master and the servants in the parable:

Actions of the master	Actions of the servants
What are the master's actions in the parable?	What are the actions that the servants have to take in the parable?

2. Find out the meaning of the following roles and situations in the parable.

Roles and situations in the parable	Meaning of the parable
Master (Who does the "master" refer to?)	
The master leaving home for a far journey (What does this matter refer to?)	
Servants (Who do the "servants" refer to?)	
The servants working hard with alertness (What does working hard and being alert refer to?)	



Material 1: Events during the End of Days and the time of the last day

Events during the End of Days

- Jesus told his disciples about things that would happen during the End of Days (Mark 13:7-12), saying that there would be wars, disasters, earthquakes and famines in many places.
- The faith of the believers would be challenged. They would even be beaten up, and family members would betray each other because of the loss of faith.

Time of the last day

- When everyone was curious about when the last day would be, Jesus said clearly, “No one knows, however, when that day or hour will come — neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; only the Father knows.” (Mark 13:32)
- Jesus had admitted directly that he did not know the exact day of God’s judgment and when he himself would be back.
- Jesus preferred to leave certain matters in God’s hands without enquiring. It reminds us that it is unnecessary for normal people to predict the day and time of the end of the world and to know when Jesus will be back. Isn’t it any difference from blasphemy if men try so hard looking for answers on matters that even Jesus was content with not knowing? Thus, we should follow Jesus, being content with not knowing the time of the end of the world.

Reference:

Barclay, William (1954). *The Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press.
pp.336-337.



Material 2: To live with alertness

Jesus used a parable (Mark 13: 34-36) to explain the attitude people should have when facing the unknown future.

The meaning of the roles and situations in the parable

- “Master”: represents Jesus Christ
- “Leaving his house for a far journey”: refers to Jesus leaving the earth and going back to heaven.
- “Giving authority to his servants... commanding the porter to watch” refers to Jesus wanting the followers to pray and be alert and faithful on earth.

The meaning and lesson of the parable

At that time, the disciples would think that the parable illustrated them as the servants waiting for their master. They knew that the master would be back but they did not know when. Later, Jesus was crucified. He then resurrected and rose to heaven. He gave his disciples authority to serve and witness him. Everyone should fulfill his own duties and wait for the Lord to come back. We should not be slack by think that the Lord is not yet back.

From the parable: insight to modern people's attitude towards life

The parable teaches us to live with alertness. Being alert does not mean living in fear. Instead, it is good enough to try our best to fulfill our duties every day. If the follower is a loyal servant, leading an alert and pious life, when the Christ comes back will not bother him/her. We should be virtuous and alert at all times so that we are well-prepared to welcome Jesus Christ at any moment with ease.

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