

We Shall Not Be Moved
Mark 13:1-13
November 15, 2015

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the Gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Have you ever thought about how many aspects of life are focused on the future? Parents save toward their children's education. Economists study market variables to predict investment trends. Environmentalists make predictions of doom concerning atmospheric changes.

What about you? What is your personal future? Wouldn't it be something to know if your future were going to be bright and cheery or dark and gloomy? Do you know what your future holds? How do you, as a believer in Jesus Christ, face the future?

If the future is unpredictable, is there anything about the future we can be sure of? Is there anything we can cling to? Is there any solid ground we can trust?

In today's text, Jesus tells us that the most solid earthly things will not stand forever. No matter how secure something of this life appears, it will fall. One day all that you see around you will be gone. The only thing that will stand is something that appears powerless – the cross.

The massive Temple in Jerusalem was leveled by the Roman army just 40 years after Jesus spoke the words of our text. Even though it was God's Temple, it was earthly and it did not stand. By comparison, the one who trusts in the crucified and resurrected Christ will stand – unshaken until the end.

Our reading takes place just a few days before Jesus is betrayed, arrested, tried,

beaten, and crucified. The perfect life that Jesus led is drawing to an end. The time was short and

Jesus spent these last few days teaching in Temple. He told parables. He debated with the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. This was also the time when Jesus taught about giving back to God by drawing attention to the two copper coins offered by a poor widow.

As Jesus and his followers left the Temple, his disciples behaved like country bumpkins on their first trip to the big city. They were sightseeing their way through the streets of Jerusalem when someone commented on the beauty of the Temple. I can easily imagine that they were horrified when Jesus said: *Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down* (Mk 13:2 ESV).

It must have taken some time for the disciples to process this news, because no one asked Jesus to explain himself until they reached the Mount of Olives. That's when four of them approached Jesus with the question: *Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?* (Mk 13:4 ESV).

Jesus doesn't respond to their question with a cryptic parable. Instead, Jesus tells them what the future will be like. Not the immediate future they were asking about, but the end of all time. Jesus tells them what the world will be like between his ascension and his return.

Jesus gives four examples of things that people put their trust in. Four examples of things that will not stand forever. You can read a history book or you can look around today and see that Jesus' words were true.

The first foundation that crumbles is religion. Jesus says: *See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray* (Mk 13:5-6 ESV). The first sign of the end is deception. Notice where the deception takes place – in the church. False doctrine begins among believers.

Those who wish to use God's Word for their own gain lead many people astray. Some claim to be Christ. Some just offer a flimsy substitute for Christ. None of them offer the truth.

Many people believe that anything that appears spiritual must be good. These folks feel that the more spirituality in the world the better. However, new age spirituality, eastern religions, harmony with nature, feminist religions, politically correct religions, and even the occult can mistakenly be welcomed as the opening of the heart of mankind to things that are spiritual.

Unfortunately, all of these are deceptions. They turn the soul away from the death and resurrection of Jesus, and point the gullible person back to the ways of darkness. Paul warned Timothy about this very thing: *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons* (1 Ti

4:1 ESV).

We must never assume that anything religious conveys God's truth. The gods and religions of this world, like the stones of the Temple, will all be torn down.

The second foundation to be overthrown is political power. Many people put their trust in the government, but listen to what Jesus says: *When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains* (Mk 13:7-8 ESV).

Because of the great power they have, people tend to think that governments will last forever. But, the Greek empire fell. The Roman empire fell. The Huns, the Turks, the Chinese, the English empires all fell. If the world lasts long enough, and if it doesn't change its ways, even America will fall.

Political empires, while being ordained by God, are still of this world. That means that, like the massive stones of the Temple, they will all be torn down.

The third sign of the end is the distress of nature. Scripture explains that, since the first sin in Eden, nature has also been under the curse of sin: *We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now* (Ro 8:22 ESV). Earthquakes, tornados, floods, droughts, hurricanes are all happening with greater frequency.

Still, many people reason that if we can appease nature, all will be well. But the nature they feel is their salvation is a nature corrupted by sin. That natural order which God created in the Garden of Eden will never be restored until Jesus returns.

The fourth foundation to fall should fill us with horror. **The breaking down of the family unit is the last sign of the end.** At this point, we will not only suffer persecution from without, but also betrayal from within.

Our personal commitments to each other, even the closest family relationships, don't provide eternal security. As important and God-pleasing as they are, if we put our trust in our relationships, we will be shaken, because relationships fail. All around us we see the family unit being torn down like the Temple in Jerusalem.

But all is not lost. We shall not be moved because the ground we stand on is firm. We stand on the promises of God in Jesus Christ.

The four signs of the end describe conditions during every generation. Their number and intensity don't tell us that our generation is the last generation. Instead, they tell us to watch, to be ready, and to stand firm on the foundation of Christ. They tell us that at every moment the world is prime for the end to come. Our sin begs for the return of our God.

That can be a scary thought. All that people have worked to build will be torn down. And the end will come without notice. But take heart. All that God builds will last forever. We can stand bold and confident on the Rock of our Salvation. We, who are in Christ, have nothing to fear.

In our baptism, we were joined to Christ's death and resurrection. In his death, we have died to sin. In his resurrection, we have risen to new life. In baptism, God has given us forgiveness of sin, the Holy Spirit, and faith in our Savior. What a miracle! The greatest structures of this world will be lost, but the simple water and Word of baptism will last for eternity.

God's promises stand forever because they are built on the perfect life of Jesus, and on his blood shed on the cross. Again, we have nothing to fear.

The signs of the end from our text have their purpose. They warn us of God's judgment on the sin of the world, and the coming of the Righteous Judge. These signs expose the false foundations that will all be removed on the Last Day.

Until that day comes, we must carry out the mandate from our text. We must boldly proclaim the Gospel to all nations. And we can do that because standing on the firm foundation of Jesus and his cross, we shall not be moved.