



The Gospel of Mark | Mark 13:1-8 May 3rd, 2020

Well this morning, I want us to turn in our Bibles to Mark chapter 13, Mark 13. And if you don't have a Bible handy, I want to ask you to grab one. Just run in the other room in your house, get one real quick, um, or take your phone and tap away, find the app that has a Bible, and look with me at Mark 13. Now I'm gonna be reading from the ESV translation if that's helpful for you to follow along. And what I want to do is, I want to walk us through a section of scripture that is, um, it's called the Olivet Discourse. That's the name of this. It's because Jesus is on the Mount of Olives as he teaches this. And this text outside of the Book of Revelation is one of those confusing passages for people to read. And so, when people read this, it's very confusing to them, and it's because it deals with prophecy. And because it deals with prophecy, it leads to all sorts of very bizarre interpretations, and people are very confused, and it leads us to think of some really crazy stuff. Now, this is a moment right now in history, in which people are really asking questions about the end of the world. You know, it's one thing to watch *The Walking Dead* on TV and think about apocalyptic things. But it's another thing to be living through something that's like what we're living through right now. And because of that, what happens is, is that you come to a passage like this, that in your Bible it may just say at the beginning of this chapter, something like 'Signs of the End of the Age' and you say, oh my gosh, like this is about the end of the world. And then you come to it and you're really nervous because you start looking around and you start reading things in the newspaper and you start wondering, is this the end?

Well, I want to start this morning by telling you there's probably three reasons that we wind up misinterpreting this text, this chapter, so often alright? The first one is, is that we read into the text. We just simply take our beliefs and we just impose them on to the text, and it's very easy for us to do. In fact, if you just look at what it says in the ESV right above verse three, it says 'Signs of the End of the Age.' Now, when you read that, then you just start reading the next few verses that come after that and you read that right into it, you say, well, that's what that's about. Or the second thing that happens is, you just kind of read over the text. And by reading over the text, I mean, you just kind of skip certain words as you go and so you don't pay attention to everything that's there, you just kind of pay attention to things that you see and the things that you don't understand, you just skip them, alright? The other reason is, is that we read this text apart

from its context. And so, when we come to scripture, all right, the scriptures are very, very important to be interpreted rightly, because if you don't interpret them rightly, you don't know what they mean and scripture has a literary and a historical context every time you come to it. And so, you have to pay attention to where it is in literature within the text, and then where it is within history within the actual events that took place. And so, today we want to pay close attention to the literary and the historical context of this book, or of this chapter, because if we don't, then we're gonna make the same mistake that others make, which is we're going to just read into the text and we're gonna read right over the text, right? So, we want to pay very, very, very close attention to what's there. Now, this chapter, it should be studied as a whole. Like we should come to this and study the whole chapter in one sitting. Now, we're not gonna do that because that would take several hours, even though you don't have anything else to do today. I don't know, you're just in your house you know what, under home arrest or whatever, so where else do you have to go? But we'll just say we're gonna break it up, alright? Um, now what that means, let me just throw out a warning here, is that means that when we don't make it through the whole thing, that means you just got to be patient. So, don't say oh, well, what about this? And you didn't address this. And just realize that we're going to get to that. It might be in a couple of weeks from now, but we're gonna get this. So, this isn't binge watching Netflix. We're gonna just have to take our time and go slow through this, alright? My plan really was to break this into three messages. I wanted to cover verses 1 through 13 today, 14 through 27 next week, and then maybe 28 to 37 the next week. But by the time I got to a couple of days of good study on this text, I just decided that was gonna take a lot longer than that, so today we're gonna try to just make it through verse number eight, okay? So, let's read this text together, and then I want to pray one more time and just ask God to really help us understand this, okay?

So, beginning in Mark, chapter 13:1 we read these words: 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 lead 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.

Now, as you see this text, automatically you begin to see that there are things here that probably you've heard before, and there are things that you've heard

from people as they've read this and had a newspaper in the other hand, and they've pointed them out and said here, this is it right here. And so, what we're going to do is we want to just take our time and work through this. Now, I'd love for you to take it at some point today and just sit back down and read from verses one all the way through to the end of the chapter and just see the big picture. But for the sake of time, we're just gonna cover these eight verses, alright? So, let's pray one more time together.

Father, we want to ask that you would give your grace to us in these moments as we study this text together. That it would make sense to us. Lord, you've not given us your word so that we can be confused. You've given it to us so that it sheds light upon us in the world that we live in. And it sheds light upon the path that you've called us to walk as your disciples. And so please do that for us now, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Alright. Here's the first thing I want you to know when you read this text, alright? When you come to Mark 13, the purpose of this chapter is not to provide you with a timetable for predicting future events. That's the first thing I need you to know. It's not to predict future events, namely the return of Christ. This is what we do as we come to this, we say this is gonna help me predict when Jesus will return. That's not what it's about. Instead, it is an exhortation to faithful discipleship in the present, alright? In the present moment. It's an exhortation for you to be a faithful disciple. Now that can be seen very clearly, if remember I said, we gotta pay attention to the literary and the historical context, if we pay attention to those things, it can be seen very clearly. So, the literary context of this helps us from the outside to make sense of this, okay? So, look at these repetitive phrases throughout chapter 13 and you'll see this alright? There's a series of imperatives that happened over and over and over again in verses five through 33. And then there's a couple of related imperatives, and imperatives are commands, that happened down in verses 33 through 35. So, look with me at Mark 13:5, Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray." See those two words 'See that?' That's a Greek word, blepo, alright? And notice, he says see that no one leads you astray, alright? Look at verse number nine, But be on your guard. That's the same Greek word, blepo, alright? Be on guard. See that. It means you better be watching out, alright? To be on guard means to stand watch. Look at verse 23, But be on guard. There's that word again, blepo. Look at verse 33, Be on guard. There's the word blepo again, notice the repetition of this word. Now if you're seeing it in English, you don't see that it's the same word because sometimes you see it as 'see that' sometimes you see it as 'on guard.' But when you see it this way, you begin to recognize hey, he keeps saying this a lot of times. He must really want them to pay attention to this! And then look at verse 33 where he says be on guard and he says, keep awake. Now that's a different word, but it's in the same range there. It has the same meaning; you need to keep awake. And then he says in verse 35, Therefore, stay awake. And then in verse 37 he says, And what I say to

you, I say to all: Stay awake. So, notice in 33, 35, and 37, he uses this language of keeping awake or staying awake. Keep awake is a different word in verse 33 than stay awake in verse 35 and 37. But the point being, you see this in these six verses, that in six verses he says something to them over and over and over again.

So, the first thing I want you notice in this text is these imperatives: Be on guard, and stay awake. And I want you to notice that he's giving these to his disciples, who are asking him a question, which means there's a historical meaning to this. He's not talking right now about things 2,000 years down the road. He's telling these people in this moment, something they need to do. Which means that the literature itself tells us something about this is really important for them, not for people 2,000 years later trying to figure out where Russia or Syria come in, but for them, ok? So, this is our first indicator that this is about faithful discipleship in the present. Now, let's look at the overall literary context of Mark 13, alright? Everybody still with me? It's your house. Take a deep breath. Grab an extra cup of coffee. Alright, here we go. Mark 11 through 15. Those chapters, okay? Turn back to the beginning of Mark 11 and let me show you this. All of this happens in the last week of Jesus's life. Now, we started preaching in our church in Mark 11 several months ago, okay? So, you forget that when we started talking about something months ago that we're all still in just the same few days. In fact, we've only covered like the first few days of the week at this point, okay? So, beginning in Mark, chapter 11 in verse number 1, Jesus enters into Jerusalem. And this is on Sunday of the last week of his life, and it concludes, this triumphal entry concludes, in verse number 11 of chapter 11, when it says he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. Now notice he's gone into the temple. Everything that's happening here is gonna be about the temple. And he looked around and when he looked around, this was, he was critically appraising. This was scrutinization of what he saw. Everything. And it was late and he went out and he went to Bethany with the twelve. So that's the end of Sunday. In verse 12, we pick up Monday morning, alright? Look at what it says in verse 12, On the following day when they came from Bethany. Now, on this day, on Monday, Jesus is going to do two things. He's going to curse the fig tree, and he's going to clear out the temple, alright? That's what's gonna happen in verses 12 through 19. Verse 12 says on the following day, when they came from Bethany, and then the day ends in verse 19 with these words: And when evening came they went out of the city. Now, notice on that day then, what Jesus does is in verses 12 through 14, he curses the fig tree. And then in verses 15 through 19 he clears out the temple. Now you have to understand these two events because you got to keep those events in mind when you're studying Mark 13. If you don't keep those in mind, which is why I say the literature is important, the literary context, if we don't keep that in mind then you won't understand, because what happens in Mark 13, all that takes place takes place in light of these two events - cursing the fig tree and clearing the temple. So that's the context. You got to remember that, alright? So, the

cursing of the fig tree if you remember when we studied this, and the clearing out of the temple, those two events interpret one another, okay? So, Jesus, remember when he curses the fig tree, he shuts it down forever. It's never gonna bear fruit again. And so, Jesus wasn't cleansing the temple we saw, but he was closing the temple down. And his actions in the temple were divine judgment against the temple. In other words, Jesus, when he clears out the temple, he's saying, hey, the temple is closed for business; this is unnecessary because Jesus is the true temple, now. If you want to meet God, you don't go to a temple, you go to Jesus. Which means you can meet God right now in your living room just the same as you could here, alright? You didn't have to come here. This wasn't a sanctuary. This isn't a temple, alright? You can meet him in the living room. So, Jesus shuts down the temple just as he shut down the fig tree. Look at verse 14 of chapter 11: And he said to the fig tree, may no one ever, see that 'no one ever,' eat from your fruit again. See that - ever again, ever again. And his disciples heard it. Ok now watch, the disciples hear this, the disciples hear 'no one's ever eating from that tree again.' And that tree and what happened is gonna be the interpretation of the temple. So just the same as they're never gonna eat from the tree again. Never gonna come to the temple and have their sins forgiven again. That's all going away. It's out of business because Jesus is now the forgiveness of sins. He's now the temple.

Now we come to Tuesday. Tuesday begins in chapter 11 verse number 20, where it says as they passed by in the morning, so now we're on Tuesday morning, alright? In the last week of Jesus, by Friday he's gonna be dead, by Sunday of the next week he's gonna be alive. As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. Notice, completely destroyed. Complete destruction. It's not gonna be reformed. It's destroyed totally. And Peter remembered. Well, that doesn't surprise us, because we saw in verse 14 that the disciples heard him say this to the fig tree. And he says, Rabbi, look, the fig tree that you cursed, not cleansed, but cursed, just like we said he didn't cleanse the temple, he went into the temple and overthrew the money changers and cursed the temple; it's withered. So, in one day, a total miracle of destruction. A fig tree, one day, dies, alright? Now, that's how Tuesday morning begins in verse number 20 of chapter 11. This leads to then Jesus going into the temple in verse 27, it says they came to Jerusalem, still on Tuesday morning, right after they passed the fig tree, and he walks into the temple. Here's the location. And the chief priests and the scribes and the elders all come to him. Now, this day is gonna last from verse 20 of chapter 11 all the way through the end of chapter 13. One long day, okay? And so, remember that Jesus at this point has said that both the fig tree and the temple have given the impression, by the leaves on the fig tree and by all the stuff going on the temple, that they have something to offer. But in reality, neither of them produce any fruit. And so, remember what Jesus has said. This is the key point: both the fig tree and the temple can only be admired for their appearance. But they can't do anything for you. You can only admire their appearance. Now with all that in

mind, he goes into the temple and between 11:20 and where we ended last week at the end of chapter 12, one group after the next comes to Jesus and tries to challenge him. And he defeats all of the leaders in the debates that they have in the temple, and then in verse one of chapter 13 it says: And as he came out of the temple. Alright, so now he comes out. So, they've been in the temple the whole time from 11:20 all the way to 13:1, and it's now Tuesday afternoon. All of this is the literary context of Mark 13, alright? So, you got to keep all that together when you interpret Mark 13. Because if you don't, you'll be really confused because you'll just forget something that the disciples could not have forgotten, which is hey, the day started off with us being reminded that the fig tree is cursed because all it can do is be admired for its appearance. And that is just like what Jesus did when he went in the temple, which is basically said, hey, all we can do is admire its appearance, but neither of them produce any fruit. So, remember this alright? Prior to entering the temple, what do they see? Fig tree. Totally destroyed. And what did Jesus say? I said it's the key point: The fig tree and the temple can only be admired for their appearance. So now they come out of the temple on the same day, and the first thing Jesus's disciples do when they come out of the temple is they look at the temple and they see how amazing it is, and they admire its appearance. Notice they say this to Jesus in verse one, and as they came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what a beautiful, I mean, what a wonderful building this is Jesus.' They admire this building. Now there's a reason for this. That's because Herod had begun building this temple in 19 BC. Now Solomon had built the first temple and it was destroyed by the Babylonians. And it was destroyed by the Babylonians back in 587 BC, and then it was rebuilt after they'd gone into exile by Herod, and the rebuilding of this temple, Herod's temple, began in 19 BC. Now, this is 33-ish BC, we could say, and so at this point, somewhere between 30 and 33 BC, we can say that this temple has been under construction for over 50 years at this point, and it was truly one of the wonders of the world. If you read Josephus, who's a Jewish historian who lived during this time, he writes about the temple in magnificent ways. In fact, it was, the outer walls were all overlaid with big plates of gold and so when the sun rose in the morning and hit the temple walls, it shined like it looked like it was set on fire it was so bright, and that's what you would see. And then if you were in a distance and the sun was going down, you would see the white marble and it looked like a big snowcapped mountain because it sat on the temple mount, it was genuinely one of the wonders of the world. And so, this is an amazing complex, very big, very large. And so, Jesus has the disciples say to him, Look! And now Jesus says to them in verse two, do you see the great buildings? So look, Jesus hears the disciples and the disciples say 'Look at how beautiful this is!' And Jesus says, hey no know, you look! And what does he want them to see? They want Jesus to see how magnificent the temple is, its appearance, and Jesus wants his disciples to see what's gonna happen to this temple. Remember what happened to the fig tree? Complete destruction. Withered. Never gonna return.

Look at what Jesus says. Jesus says this in verse two, you see these great buildings? There's not gonna be one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. In other words, totally destroyed, just as the fig tree was withered to its roots. Complete destruction is gonna happen to the temple.

Now, you gotta imagine how unbelievable these words are when Jesus says them. And it's almost impossible to think the way that they thought. Because we've never seen this temple. And we can't imagine something taking over 50 years to construct at this point. Suddenly just in one day just gone, right? But you gotta understand it the way they understand it. Just imagine if on September the 10th you were in New York City with a tour guide, and the tour guide takes you past the World Trade Centers, the Twin Towers, and you stand there and you look at those Twin Towers as they rise up into the sky and you say, wow, what a magnificent thing this is to see these two giant buildings. And what if someone in the group with you looked and said, hey I'll tell you what, by tomorrow evening, neither of these two will be standing. You would say this person is nuts! This is ludicrous. These two, where are they going to go by tomorrow night? 24 hours from now, gone? No. And yet that's what it would have sounded like. So, you gotta put yourself in their shoes to make sense of how just completely preposterous it sounds when Jesus says, hey, look, you see these? All these magnificent stones you see, none of them will be left. They're all coming down. Alright, so that's the context that's taking place. Now. Notice between verse number two and verse number three, the ESV, which is if you're following along with me, does something really unhelpful. And that is that it separates these two things. It creates a new heading, so verses one and two say, 'Jesus Foretells the Destruction of the Temple.' And then above verse three, there's another heading put in by the editors that says 'Signs of the End of the Age.' And so now you say, oh, well, he went from that conversation to now he's gonna talk about this, and so it's not really helpful at all. In fact, the NIV holds it all together as one heading from 1 to 31, but it just calls it 'Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times.' Now what I'm gonna do is I want to show you how those headings are just not right, alright?

So look, this adds to the confusion of the text when you see these headings and the reason it does is because it seems to give you this idea that these verses one and two and then three and four, don't go together. Like it's two different things, and it seems to be like there's a change of topic, but there's not really a change of topic. So, you're going to see that these headings, really all they do is help us to just impose meaning on the text, which is what I said is the problem. You can't read into the text, can't read over the text. You gotta hold the literary and historical context together. So, let's see here because when we see what it says, then maybe we won't say oh, so that's the end of the conversation about the temple and now we're onto the signs of the end times. Good, prophecy! I'm ready for this. Well, look in verse three, alright? And as he sat on the Mount of Olives, now the Mount of Olives is halfway pretty much between Jerusalem and

Bethany. And Bethany was where Jesus was staying for the night. We saw this over and over again in verses, in chapter 11 in this whole section, right? And so, this is opposite the temple, it tells us, which means he has a perfect view of the temple. If you're sitting on the Mount of Olives, you look at the temple, you have a perfect view of the temple. And it says that Peter and James and John and Andrew, these are his disciples, and they asked him privately a question. Now, you have to remember that these guys were still in shock, alright? They've just heard Jesus tell them that this temple is gonna be totally destroyed, and they're kind of in shock. And so, they've walked along with Jesus to the Mount of Olives, and on the way they've been saying, you know, I can't, how is this gonna happen? The whole thing's coming down? There's no way, it's crazy. So, they get there and they have been processing this, and now they want to ask him about it. So, they say, hey, uh, we want to ask you something. So, they come to Jesus, verse four tells us this, so tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? So, I want you to notice two questions, alright? Look at the first question: When will these things be? See that word 'when?' That's a matter of timing. This is a question about timing. When will these things be? Notice the second question: What will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? So, the first question is when, the second question is what. We want to know when this is gonna happen, and we want to know what we ought to be looking for that's gonna let us know, so we can be prepared that that's gonna happen, alright? Now notice that phrase 'these things.' When will 'these things' be? What will be the sign when all 'these things.' Now what things? What things? That's the question, right? So, the things that he's just said in verse two are these: There's not gonna be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. So that's the things they're asking about. That's the topic. So, the topic is the destruction of the temple. It's not a new topic. It's the topic that has overshadowed everything for the past 24 hours for these guys. For the last 24 hours, the only thing they thought about is, is the fig tree was cursed, we went into the temple, the temple was overturned, and then we came out and Jesus pointed to the fig tree and said, this is what's gonna happen to that temple right there. And now here we are the next day, the fig tree is withered, and now he's telling us that the temple is gonna wither. And so, it's not like suddenly they just said, oh, let's have a new topic. So, what the disciples want to know is, when will the temple be destroyed? And what will be the sign when the temple is about to be destroyed?

So how do we wind up misreading the text? Let me show you a few observations. Let's just kind of pause here before we move forward, alright? So, the first thing is this, so far, it's safe to say isn't it, that this text has said absolutely nothing about the end times. It's said absolutely nothing about it. So, what is the context? The context is the destruction of the temple. That's the only thing we've been talking about from chapter 11 all the way through to this point right here. Nothing about 'second return of Christ,' any of this, just about

the temple. The second observation is this, based on the literary and historical context, literary context being everything we've seen in chapter 11 all the way up to this point, and the historical context being the actual conversation Jesus is having with his disciple about this historical thing that's gonna happen. Based on that, does it seem reasonable that the disciples at this moment would ignore such a monumental declaration that Jesus has just made about the temple being destroyed and just skip over that. I mean, we wouldn't do that if somebody said to us, hey, the World Trade Centers are coming down tomorrow, and you say that's great, hey, what's the best Italian restaurant in New York? Cause I'm kind of hungry right now. We wouldn't say that. Instead we'd say, whoa, hold on. How is that happening? When? I don't want to be standing here, when's it gonna happen, right? So they're not going to do that. They're not going to just suddenly skip to hey that's great but, hey, we want to know about the second coming. They haven't even come to believe at this point still that he's gonna die. They keep saying to him, no, you're not gonna die. So why would they think second coming? They just think he's gonna roll into Jerusalem and become king. They're not interested in the second coming. So likewise, does it seem reasonable that Jesus would ignore the disciples question? If the disciples were asking him, well, when's the temple coming down, and what's gonna be the sign? Does it seem reasonable that he would just ignore that and just say, let me begin to tell you about the second coming of Jesus. Like it doesn't seem reasonable either, right? So, you got to remember the full context. In 24 hours, cursed the fig tree, cleansed the temple, fig tree is destroyed, fig tree symbolizes destruction of the temple, says the temple is gonna be destroyed. This is the only thing on their mind. So now then the third thing I want you to notice in the text so far is this, look at the word 'sign' in verse four. You see that? Pay very close attention there. What does it say? It says 'sign' singular. It doesn't say 'signs' plural, it says 'sign' singular. Furthermore, it says 'the sign.' You put the word 'the' in front of it that emphasizes the singularity of this sign. So how many times have you heard someone preach a sermon on Mark chapter 13 on the signs of the end times? And they take everything that Jesus says after this, that I'm about to read, and they tell you all of these are the signs of the end times. And yet, so far, what we can say is he hasn't said anything about the end times, and the only question about a sign has been about a single sign. It hasn't been about any signs of the end times because none of that language has even taken place.

So, here's what the text does say, the disciples are asking when one event is gonna happen. The destruction of the temple. And disciples are asking what the sign, singular, is gonna be that the temple is about to be destroyed. Now Jesus is gonna answer both of their questions, but he's gonna first begin by giving them a series of non-signs, alright? In other words, he's gonna tell him, look, some people are gonna appear, some events are gonna happen, but they're not the sign, alright? So it's interesting that many people describe the events and the people in verses five through eight as the signs of the end, even

though Jesus is going to specifically say they're not signs of the end, and he's going to specifically tell his disciples not to be deceived into thinking that those are signs of the end. And yet that's what we do. So, look at verse five. Let's look at these non-signs. And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray." Now notice Jesus begins the answer to their question with a warning to them, "See that no one leads you astray." Alright, so that's a big, big important moment there. He says to them, look, some things are gonna happen alright? Before the temple is destroyed, but these aren't the sign. And so, they're just things that are gonna happen, ok? So, don't be led astray by them. And he says, don't be led astray by these non-signs. Here's what they are, the first is false messiahs. Verse six, many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' Meaning I'm the Christ, I'm the Messiah. And those people who say that, they're gonna lead many people astray. So, Jesus is saying look, before the temple is destroyed, there's gonna be a lot of people and they're gonna claim to be the Messiah. And we know in the first century there were lots of people who claimed to be the Messiah. But he says that's not the sign of the end of the world, alright? It's just something that's gonna happen. So, listen very carefully than, false messiahs are not to be seen as having any end time significance. But that's what we often hear isn't it? Ah man, there's a lot of people claiming to be the Messiah. That's what they said would happen in the last days. Well, it's not what the text says. So, furthermore, I want you to notice this, Jesus says it's gonna happen in their lifetime. Don't you see this, right? How do I know that? You say how do you know he said that? Because it's right there in the text. Look at what he says. See that no one leads you. You. Who's he talking to? Peter, James, John, Andrew. See that no one leads you astray. He's talking to the disciples. So why do we read this chapter and assume he's not talking to those disciples? Why do we think he's talking to somebody else? He's talking to them. Second thing he tells him, don't be led astray by wars. He says, when you hear of wars, verse seven, 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. Again, guess what? This is not the sign. This is just something that's going to take place in the regular course of history. Wars are gonna happen. People don't like each other. Sin exists. So listen, wars are not to be seen as having any end time significance, because wars were happening before Jesus came, wars have been happening after he came. Again, what does he say? He says, 'And when you hear of wars.' You. He's talking to them. We always want to make this about our time. Oh, they're looking for nuclear weapons in Iraq. And if they find them and that used to be where Babylon is and here's the end of the world. Look, he's talking to them. We want to read into the text. We just read the headings of our Bible, 'Signs of the End Times,' put that in the text and we read over the text. We read over the text and we skip important words like 'you.' We got to read the word 'you.' He's talking to Peter, James, John, and Andrew, and he's telling Peter, James, John, and Andrew not to be alarmed. Furthermore, notice his exact words in verse seven, this must take place. In other words, these things are just going to happen. But look at this. The end is

not yet. He tells the disciples, look, when you hear about wars, don't get all uptight. This isn't the sign, because this isn't the end. Listen, what do you think when you read the words, the end is not yet. That's the exact opposite of the end is happening, isn't it? That can't be the end. It says the end is not yet. So how many times have you heard sermons on the signs of the end times? False Christ, wars, rumors of wars? Yet all of this is happening when Peter, James, John, and Andrew were alive in the first century. So, we can't read into this. Then the third thing he says is there's gonna be disasters. He says, look, verse number eight, nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. That's man-made disasters. We did this to ourself, and he says, there's gonna be earthquakes in various places. There's going to be famines. That's natural disasters. People didn't create that. It just happened. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. Look, are these 'the' sign of the end? No. These are all just things that are gonna happen in the first century, which those disciples are going to experience themselves. They all experience it. There were earthquakes, there were famines. I mean, heck, in the book of Acts, what do we read them doing? Taking up a collection for a famine in Jerusalem, alright? This is what happens.

So, some of you, you know, you struggle to believe this. You look at this and say, yeah, but I don't know, this seems like the end times. But look, that's exactly what the text says, right there, it says these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Beginning. Does that sound like end? Does beginning sound like, does it say end? Or does it say beginning? It says beginning! Can't be any further from the end in the beginning, right? Okay, so now look what he says in verse five: See that no one lead you astray. So, you just go right back up to the top. It helps you. Jesus began his answer to them with a warning. So when you hear a sermon, or when you hear somebody on TV, or you see the latest bestselling book that came out, whether it's nonfiction or fiction, that's all about the end times, and it runs right to this and says wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, false messiahs, ah they're all over the place. And you read with the newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other hand, and you get all anxious, oh, my gosh the end, ah this is happening! You just got to stop and say, look, when somebody goes down this list, they got a Bible on this side, a newspaper on this side, and they show me all the signs of the end, see right there? It says that. And over here it says this right here. You know, I don't need to read The New York Times with Mark 13 to make sense of Mark 13. I need to read Mark 11 and 12 with Mark 13 to make sense of Mark 13, right? So, these are not the sign of the end. They're all just things that Peter and James and John and Andrew needed to know were gonna take place in the first century prior to this destruction of the temple, okay? So, here's the thing. It kills me that I'm going to stop right here at this text. But here's what I imagine. What I imagine is this, I imagine your head is probably just throbbing, okay? So at least you're at home close to the Advil in your medicine cabinet maybe, alright? And you're gonna go and just decompress, alright? Uh, there's a lot there. And as again, as I

said at the beginning, all this needs to be seen as the whole chapter, alright? But if I decided to teach this whole chapter today and then you'd be begging for the end just to come. And so, I'm going to just slow down here, and we're gonna stop. We're gonna come back next week. Now, what that means is this, you're gonna have to just feel like you were left with the cliffhanger, alright? Like you were, you were watching something on TV and you couldn't binge watch it, you had to wait until it came back on, alright? And so, you could see what happened next the following week. You gotta come back next week and you got to see this, alright? That means also, like, don't rush ahead and say, well, right there it says that, alright? Well, I haven't covered right there where it says that yet, so just be patient and let's walk through it because I'm more interested in you being good Bible readers, than I am us rushing through a text, alright? If anything, I hope to help you learn how to read the Bible as we go through this chapter too, okay?

So, I want to give you a couple of thoughts in conclusion, alright? So, let me just give you three thoughts in conclusion to help you make sense of at least these first eight verses, alright? The first is this. I just want you to think about this, God is sovereign over history. Like that's an amazing conclusion to draw from these eight verses. Look at what it says in verse number seven again, when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed. These are things that look, must take place. But the end is not yet. Here's why, nations will rise against other nations. Kingdoms will rise against other kingdoms. There will be earthquakes in various places. There will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. Now, how can Jesus speak with such certainty about things that must happen, and will happen, and where they fall in relation to the beginning and the end? He can only say that because he's sovereign over history. Only someone who is sovereign over history can say such a thing. If I hop in the car with my kids and let's just say my kids were all still very young and we hop in the car to go somewhere. And we're gonna go on a 15-hour road trip and we only get 15 minutes down the road. Right? And they say, how much longer? And you say, 14 hours and 45 minutes. And they say is that long? You say, it's forever. Just turn on the movie and take a nap, you know, and they're bored. 15 minutes in, right? Now, they have no perspective, and they're not in control. And for them, it just seems like an eternity. For me, I have a clear understanding. Furthermore, forget the time aspect. They wouldn't even know how to get there. If we said hey, you navigate, where do you think we'd wind up? We'd wind up in a ditch, okay? They can't navigate. I can navigate because I understand where we're going. Listen, God is sovereign over history. God can say, hey, I can tell you where we're going. We're going here and along the way there's gonna be some earthquakes. Along the way there's gonna be a famine. Along the way there's actually gonna be wars. Nations are gonna fight nations. Kingdoms are gonna rise up against kingdoms. You say, how do you know that's gonna happen? I know where we're going. I'm sovereign over history. Okay, well, how do you know when you say that we're going there, that this is

the beginning and not the end? Because I know we're only 15 minutes from the house. I'm God, I see the whole thing. So, because God is sovereign, that means that nothing is happening apart from his governance of the world. Now, I don't know if reading Mark 13 this morning and talking about signs of the end times in the midst of the Coronavirus was something that you would come to and think, man, is this gonna give me comfort? Or is this gonna make me more anxious? Oh, my gosh, famines, wars, all this is going on. What's gonna happen? Trade wars, war with China, who's gonna run North Korea if he dies? Right? All those questions. Here's what you see when you come to this you say, hey, this stuff has been going on forever. Jesus tells me that I'm not to be alarmed by it. I'm to trust him in the midst of it. So, look at the second thing I want you to conclude from this, because God is sovereign over history, you know what that means? It means I don't have to worry. I just don't have to worry. Look at verse seven, when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, can you imagine anything that causes more alarm for people than the threat of war and rumors of wars. Forget us, we live in a place where all of our wars are fought in distant countries. What if you were the country being invaded? What if you were France when Hitler was rolling in with his tanks during World War II? Wars? Rumors of wars? This is cause for great alarm. And yet Jesus says, do not be alarmed. You know, the only reason I could have to not be alarmed is if it were all under control. See, that means God is in control. And that means that God doesn't just know *how* it's gonna turn out, it means God is going to control how it's gonna turn out because he's God. Now that means that I can look at war and I can say is war terrifying? Yes. But is God in control? Yes. Can I hear of rumors of wars and be alarmed? Yes, but if I recognize God is in control, do I have to be alarmed? No. What about an earthquake? Can I live in California and sleep in peace? God is in control. Can I endure a famine? Isn't it fascinating? We read famine on the same day that were in the midst of a week where they're telling us there could be a shortage of meat, because the meat packing plants are closing down. What if I can't get boneless skinless chicken breasts? Well, God is in control. I don't need to be alarmed. I can just rest with him. So, that means that God is bringing history to an end point. Because see Jesus keeps telling, this isn't the end. This is just the beginning here. That means that he knows how far we are from the house on the road trip, and he's bringing it to a place. There's a specific point that he's taking us to and that end point, well, good news for me. Good news for you. It's fixed. It's immovable. He's not chasing after it. Oh, well, I thought we were going here, but then it moved. Just the same as you go on a road trip, you don't leave your house and think, what if 16 hours into this 20-hour drive, the place that we're going to moves? If you're driving to Denver, Denver will still be in Denver. It's not going to go somewhere. This isn't the same as shooting a moving target in the air. Skeet shooting is way different than shooting at a stationary target, right? History's coming to a place. And so that's the third conclusion I want to draw from this. And that's this, history is going to terminate, and the terminus, the endpoint of history, is going to be at the throne of Christ. That's where it's gonna end. If you want to know

the destination we're all headed for, it is to stand before the ruler of history. Because Jesus will return. Now we're not saying because we read the text and just tried to be good Bible readers that that means we're saying Jesus isn't returning. It just means we're saying hey, let's not get our Jesus returning out of those eight verses. Jesus is going to return, and when he does return, he's gonna return and he's going to sit upon his throne forever. And that's where history is going to come to a halt. And when history comes to a halt, it's gonna be sitting in front of Jesus. And Jesus is going to judge not only history, but all of us who live during history. And that means that I can look at Jesus and say, well, wait a minute when he says, don't be alarmed about wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes and famines, that I can say, hey, I shouldn't be alarmed about that. But watch, if I'm not reconciled to Christ when history ends than I've got cause for great alarm. And the great alarm I have cause for, well I can promise you it's not a war, earthquake, or a famine. It's that I'm going to stand before one who is holy and righteous and just, and who's going to hold me and everyone else on planet Earth who lived during the history that he was ruling over, accountable for my actions during history. And my actions during history are going to be this. It's going to be either one, did I live for myself and make myself king? Or did I live for Jesus and allow him to rule over me because he is the king? Well, that means that I need to be reconciled to Christ. And it means that if I'm not reconciled to Christ, that when I come to the end of history, I have cause for great alarm because I'm going to be judged by him, held accountable for my sin, which means I'm going to spend an eternity separated from him in hell, judged for eternity because the worth of his glory is eternal. I will forever be judged eternally. Or, I'm going to greet him when he arrives as one welcoming right into my very presence, the one who I have loved and adored forever throughout my history on Earth, because he was the faithful king who loved me and gave his life and died for me. And so, that means that I have to come to Jesus at the end of history and say either I'm going to stand here and be judged on account of my sin or I'm going to stand here, reconciled to Christ, having turned from my sin and put my trust in Jesus. And I'm going to be held accountable, not for my sin, but I'm going to be judged based on his faithfulness and righteousness for me. And so, Christ has died in history for me, my sins placed upon Christ in history, Jesus rose from the grave in history. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, where he sits upon the throne, in history. Ruling over history, and all of history is going to terminate at that throne. And when it does, I will either be judged by him or I will be welcomed by him into his kingdom. And so, for now, I don't need to be alarmed by anything that's going on in the world. I don't need to run to the newspaper and grab my Bible and get really worked up over the signs of the end times. I rather need to come before Jesus and say Jesus the only sign that matters really for me is this. There's a sign that I point back to over and over again, when I'm asked about my sin and it's this sign. It says, here is where Christ died for Marks' sins on the cross. Here is where Christ was raised from the dead, victorious over death, sin, and Satan, so that Mark will not be held responsible for his sin

because Christ was held responsible for it. That's what I need to be concerned with. And if I'm concerned with that than wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, false messiahs, they need not unsettle me. Nor do food shortages, lockdowns, or Coronavirus. All they need to do is remind me there is one who rules over history. He is faithful and just. When history terminates at his throne, we will worship him forever. Amen? Amen.

Let me pray. Lord, I pray that you would give grace this morning to us to remember continually that you are so faithful and so good. You're the king of history and we worship you. In the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen. Amen.