

Mark 13:5-11 *Be Wary but Don't Worry as the End Draws Near*

Mk 13:5 Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you.

Mk 13:6 Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many.

Mk 13:7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

Mk 13:8 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

Mk 13:9 "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.

Mk 13:10 And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

Mk 13:11 Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

Through the centuries people have predicted the day when the world would end. Recently I heard that the ancient Mayan calendar predicted that the world will end shortly. Many of us can remember when the year 2,000 came and went and people predicted the end. A man named William Miller predicted the date of Christ's return to be March 21, 1844 so through the years men and women arise claiming a knowledge that only God possesses.

Most people prefer to put the world's end out of their minds but then there have been scoffers since the time of the apostles who have said the world will not end. St. Peter in his Second Epistle wrote, "You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' He promised?' Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

My friends, this world will come to an end. It will come suddenly, as a thief in the night and only God knows the date and the time. We ought not to waste our time trying to predict the time. It is God's will that we concentrate on being ready for the end when it comes. The advice Jesus gives us today is, *Be Wary but Don't Worry as the End Draws Near*.

It was Holy Week, the week of Jesus' crucifixion and then resurrection. Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple in Jerusalem when the disciples called attention to the massive stones that had been used and the magnificent buildings of the city. It was then that the Savior told them that the temple and the city would be utterly destroyed. The fall of Jerusalem took place in 70 AD when the Roman army invaded and completely destroyed the place.

Jesus' words of prophecy not only foretold the fall of Jerusalem but they also spoke of the end of the world. So they apply to us as they applied to His disciples.

Jesus said, "Watch out that no one deceives you." Be on the lookout. Be on your guard. We understand warnings. We are warned about identity theft, viruses on the internet, the swine flu. This is a much more serious warning. It is about something that can destroy our faith and rob us of our salvation. The warning is this. People are going to

try to mislead you. They will come on the basis of Jesus name. They will use His name to teach lies. They will say, "Jesus says this and Jesus says that when He does not really say such things." People will claim to speak for Jesus but instead put forth their own ideas. The result of their teachings will be that people do not put their complete trust in Jesus blood and righteousness and will look to some other way to obtain the favor of God. Some of these false prophets will claim to have new revelations from Jesus, some will claim to be the reincarnation of Jesus and others will claim to be Jesus stand-in on earth.

The sad fact is that these men and women will deceive many. Large numbers will be led from the true faith to their doom. Therefore, Christians must be on their guard lest they follow these false preachers and lose their trust in Jesus as their only Savior. But how can one spot a deceiver? Answer: by knowing the Bible and what Jesus really says.

The last era of the world, the time between our Lord's ascension and His coming again in glory, will be infected with false teachers. Another thing about these last times is that there will be signs that the world is indeed coming to an end. These are signs that people regularly ignore.

One of the signs of the coming judgment is the constant outbreaks of war and the rumors of war. You'd think mankind would learn but it doesn't. It is as ridiculous as pacifists hitting people over the head with peace signs. There are always wars going on. The world is sick. Wars are a punishment of God because of sin and they are warning of His final punishment because of mankind's wickedness.

Some might argue, "Wars have been going on for thousands of years, how can you say they are a sign of coming judgment?" Jesus answers, "Such things must happen but the end is still to come." When we hear of wars we must say to ourselves, "Jesus said there would be such things. They are a reminder that judgment is indeed coming and I want the Lord to find me in faith when that day comes."

In describing wars the Lord says people will fight against people, races against races. Governments will fight against governments. One group attacks and the other has to protect itself and so it goes on and on. Most are troubled but they don't know how to react. The Christian is to see these things as a warning.

Other signs of the end are earthquakes in various places. Hardly a week goes by without word of an earthquake in Indonesia, Alaska, or California. Famines are also a reminder of the end. Look at the pleas for help from around the world.

Jesus said these are the beginning of birth pains. This old world is sick. It is sick because of man's sin. Yet, Christians are not to fear or despair because these birth pains signal a new life that is coming. In another place our Lord says, "When these things begin to take place stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption (your freedom) is drawing near."

When believers read the signs of the end they are not to be alarmed. Why not? Because Jesus has taken their sins away. He has rescued them from the coming judgment and instead of punishment He will give them eternal life.

Another happening that will take place in these last times is Christians will suffer persecution. The Lord told His followers, "You must be on your guard for you will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. Persecution of Christians will come from people who claim to be religious. Secular authorities will also join in the attacks. Because of Jesus believers will stand before governors and kings as a witness to them. The attacks on the innocent Christians are so blatantly wrong. All they

do is to seek the welfare of their neighbor and they are treated as enemies of God and the state.

Yet, even though there will be persecution, the message of the crucified and risen Savior will be preached the world over. We cannot say when the end will come but by internet, missionaries and radio, it appears the Gospel has been preached to all nations, therefore, we have even more reason to expect the Lord's coming and the end of the world at any moment.

Jesus comforted His apostles, "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking but the Holy Spirit." When we read the Book of Acts and learn of the accounts of the trials of the apostles we see how the Lord kept His promise. We can read their inspired sermons. Modern Christians also need not worry. Though they dare not lay claim to divine inspiration they know that when they are called upon to defend their faith, they only need to speak the Word and the Holy Spirit will take care of the outcome.

Jesus spoke these words that we have read today to prepare and protect His people for the time when the end comes. They remind us to watch and pray- to be wary of false teachers and not become lazy and to take our faith for granted. These words also tell us not to worry. Our loving Lord knows what is happening and He is in charge. We don't have to worry about mankind destroying itself. The world will not end because of some catastrophic accident, a giant comet or global poisoning of the atmosphere. It will end when our good Lord decides and then He will give to us and all believers in Christ eternal life. Amen.