

**The Memoirs of Peter**  
**The Future According to Jesus, Part 3**  
**Mark 13:3-37**  
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Let me encourage you to take your Bibles, if you have them with you there, and turn with me to Mark 13. We find ourselves in the middle of the longest sermon Jesus ever gave about the future and what's coming. In Mark's gospel chapter 13, the entire chapter is devoted to this sermon, and that's unusual because Mark is really not prone to give a lot of Jesus' teaching. Most of it is action. The most common word in Mark, the word that sort of stands out as you read through it is the word "immediately." It's written to the Romans, and it's about action. It's about what Jesus did as a man of action, as a servant. But here is a message about the future.

Just to remind you of the context for those of you who might be our guests tonight, it's late Tuesday afternoon of the Passion Week. Jesus has just left the temple for the last time. And as He left the temple, He predicted that not a single stone would be left upon another. He said it would all be completely destroyed.

When He and His disciples had crossed the Kidron Valley and had reached the top of the Mount of Olives, the gospels tell us they sat down to rest. Now the Mount of Olives rises some 150 feet higher than the temple mount so it provided a magnificent view of the temple and the entire temple mount. This is the view today with the Dome of the Rock there. This is a facsimile of what it would have been like in Jesus' day – He and the disciples looking from the Mount of Olives to the west across that great temple mount where the magnificent temple of Herod stood. Thirty-five acres of area encompassed in that great temple mount. It could hold up to 400,000 people. It was a magnificent structure.

It was in that context, sitting there on the top of the Mount of Olives after having ascended that hill looking back across the Kidron Valley, that four of Jesus' disciples – those who were in the inner circle – approached Him privately. According to Matthew's gospel, they ask Him three questions. Here's how Matthew records it in Matthew 24:3 – "As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, (and then I've added the numbers just to delineate the questions they really asked.) (Tell us first of all, when will these things happen, (that is, the destruction of the temple?) (Secondly), and what will be the sign of Your coming, and (thirdly) (what will be the sign) of the end of the age?'"

So they were really asking three separate questions. When will the temple be destroyed that You have just predicted is going to happen (“not one stone left on another”)? What are the signs of Your coming? And thirdly, what are the signs of the end of the age?

Now as we’ve already learned, they didn’t see those as three distinct events separated by long periods of time. Instead, in their first century eschatology, they would have seen those three events occurring quickly together in a kind of a staccato-like fashion – one right after the other.

That’s the context in which they ask. The Messiah is here. They know Jesus is the Messiah. They know that He is surely soon going to manifest Himself as Messiah, and all of these things must happen in conjunction with that.

Jesus, in a remarkable sermon apparently delivered to only four of His disciples, explains what’s going to happen in the future. And He answered all three of their questions. The answer to the question about when the temple would be destroyed is only recorded in one place. And we’ve already looked at it, I won’t take you there, but Luke 21:20 -24. But in Mark 13 where we find ourselves, in Matthew 24 (which is Matthew’s record of the same sermon) and the rest of Luke 21 (where this, Luke records the sermon), Jesus answers their other two questions, questions two and three – what are the signs of Your coming, and what are the signs of the end of the age – because those occur in conjunction with one another.

Now just to remind you of the flow of this sermon so you kind of know where we’re going, (I’ve already pointed this out to you), but it’s basically in four parts. The first part comes in verses 5 through 13. We’ll call that section the beginning of birth pangs and I hope to look at that tonight. That is the period of time running from Christ’s life on earth (from the ascension) to the midpoint of a future seven-year tribulation. And I’ll tell you why I believe that when we get to verse 14 in a couple of weeks.

The second act or the second part of this sermon is running from verse 14 down to verse 23. It is what Jesus calls the great tribulation. This is a period of time that runs from the midpoint of the tribulation to the end of the tribulation – so the last three-and-a-half years of that seven-year period the Bible refers to as the tribulation period.

The third section of the sermon runs from verse 24 down to verse 27. It is specifically the second coming and what will happen in conjunction with Jesus’ second coming. The world has (as I’ve said to you) not seen the last of Jesus Christ. He promised He would return, and He will, and those verses describe what will happen when that happens.

The fourth part of this sermon is really an exhortation. It begins in verse 28, runs down through verse 37, an exhortation to the disciples (then and now and in the future) to be alert and to be

ready. So in this message, Jesus specifically prophesies what will happen from the time of His life on earth through the age in which we live all the way to His second coming.

Now, as I told you last time, many Christians believe that this sermon was fulfilled either entirely (we call them full preterists) or mostly (partial preterists) in 70 A.D. with the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, but those positions cannot be correct. Why?

I just want to begin by telling you why Mark 13 did not happen in 70 A.D. There are a number of reasons. Let me give you the three primary reasons. First of all, Jesus describes the tribulation in this sermon as a time that is unparalleled in all of human history. Look at verse 19: “For those days (whatever time He’s talking about) will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.” In other words, whatever time period He’s talking about is completely unparalleled in all of human history. The time around 70 A.D. with its earthquakes and the eruption of Vesuvius and all of the things that occurred and certainly the destruction of Jerusalem itself by Titus and his armies – those were horrible times. But folks, those do not rise to the occasion of what Jesus describes here.

There’s a second reason that Mark 13 could not have happened back in 70 A.D., and that is that the events that are described here will be accompanied by extreme signs in the heavens. Look at verse 24: “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven (probably asteroids and meteorites hitting the earth, disrupting life on this planet), and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.” That didn’t happen in 70 A.D. And you’ve got to do a whole lot of spiritualizing to make that have happened around the time of 70 A.D.

The third reason Mark 13 could not have happened in 70 A.D. is that the events described here will be followed immediately by the second coming of Jesus Christ. Look at verse 26: “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory. He will send forth His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.” The sermon finishes with the second coming, and these events finish with the second coming.

So for those reasons and for others (but those being the primary ones), the sermon Jesus preaches here cannot be primarily about what happened in 70 A.D. Instead, it points to the future. In this sermon, Jesus addressed a long series of events that begin with His ascension and last to the end of the age. But tonight, I just want us to look at the first part – the time from Christ’s ascension to the midpoint of a future seven-year tribulation period. That’s recorded for us in verses 5 through 13. Look at them with me. Look back at verse 3. Let’s get the context:

“As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are going to be fulfilled?’ And Jesus began to say to them, ‘See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, “I am He!” and will mislead many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.”

Now before we get into the details of that section of Scripture, I want to first make sure that you have the big picture of eschatology. A number of years ago now (probably seven years ago or so, maybe six years), I went through an overview of eschatology. That’s simply a study of last things, of what the Bible says about what is still to come. And I’m going to show you a chart that sort of gives you an overview of the order of end time events. I’m not going to prove it all to you. If you want that, you can go back and listen to the ten or twelve messages I did, sort of walking our way through eschatology at that time, but I’m just going to give you an overview. I’ve called the ‘ordo eschatos,’ the order of last things. Now for us, that starts with our own death. If Jesus does not return, all of us will die. “It is appointed unto man once to die....” You will, as I will if the Lord tarries, die. Then there will be what is known as the intermediate state. Theologians call it the state between death and when Christ returns. We’ll talk about what that is in just a moment. Then comes, on the scale of time, the rapture. That is when Christ comes for His church. It’s described in 1 Thessalonians 4. It’s intimated in other places as well.

After that time comes the tribulation period, a seven-year period of turmoil on earth – not people (tribulating) bringing tribulations to Christians although that will be true, but it’s called the tribulation because God will bring tribulation on the earth. He will bring His judgment and outpour it on the earth during those days.

After that seven-year period of the tribulation comes the second coming. Jesus returns. He takes the earth back as His own. And out of the second coming comes His reign on the earth that’s called the millennium. That will be followed (that 1000-year period of time will be followed) by

the great white throne of judgment described in Revelation 20 when every unbelieving person will stand before God and give an account. The books, the records of his life will be opened. He will be judged from those and, according to Revelation 20, Jesus Christ Himself will consign every unbeliever to eternal destruction in the lake of fire. That will be followed by the eternal state. For unbelievers, it will be the lake of fire; for believers, it will be a new heaven and a new earth.

Now just to sort of orient you, obviously death and the intermediate state are of unknown duration. We don't know how long that will be because we don't know when the end time events are going to start. But the rapture is an event, a momentary event when Christ returns for His own. It occurs at a moment in time.

The tribulation is a seven-year period, and it will be followed by the event of the second coming that's described in Revelation 19. The millennium, the 1000-year reign of Christ, is described in a number of places in Scripture, but it's especially laid out in Revelation 20.

Following that comes the event of the great white throne. We're told in that section of Scripture that God will speak the universe as we now know it out of existence. There will be nothing but God, His great throne, and all of the people who've been created, and they will stand before Him. And then of course, the eternal state is eternity future.

Where will believers be during all of these events? Well, when it comes to death and the intermediate state, when you die (if you're in Christ), your soul will be immediately in heaven. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," Paul says. Your body will remain in the grave. But when the rapture comes, if you have died, your soul will come back with Christ from heaven, and you'll be given a new glorified body. Your body will be raised into a new glorified, incorruptible form according to 1 Corinthians 15. If you are alive, if we are here when the rapture occurs, then, after those who have died are reunited with glorified bodies, we too will be gathered to Christ according to 1 Thessalonians 4: "...and so shall we ever be with the Lord." During the tribulation period, we will be in heaven.

I'll touch on that next time, I think, why, where are we, those who have died before the tribulation period. Where are we during that time? Or what happens? Why isn't the rapture mentioned in Matthew 24 and Mark 13? We'll touch on that next time, but we're in heaven during that seven-year period.

That (the second coming) we come back with Christ to the earth, that's pictured in Revelation 19. And during the millennium, we're here with Christ as He reigns on the earth. The great white throne we are present, but not judged at that judgment. We will already have gone through what the Bible calls the 'bema' seat, the judgment seat of Christ, the place where believers receive

their rewards for their service. We will not be judged for our sins because those were fully and completely judged on Jesus Christ on the cross.

And then after the great white throne where we will be present, we will live on a new earth. We are not bound eternally to live in heaven. Revelation's very clear – God will make a new heavens and a new earth, a new universe in which righteousness is at home, and that's where we're destined for. We will live on a perfect earth. As much as we enjoy this one, imagine what it'll be like when all the effects of sin are removed. So that's a biblical 'ordo eschatos.' That's what it looks like for the future in the big picture.

Now in the first section of the Olivet Discourse that we're going to look at tonight which we just read together, Jesus describes the period that begins with His life and runs to the midpoint of that seven-year tribulation period. And I say midpoint because, when you get to verse 14, there's a specific event described that we know from other texts occurs at the very midpoint of that tribulation period. And I'll show you that when we get there. But that's what the verses I just read for you (verses 5 to 13), that's what they describe is from Jesus to the midpoint of that seven-year period called the tribulation.

Now with that in mind, let's look at it together. I've called it the beginning of birth pangs because that's exactly what Jesus calls it in verse 8. Look at the end of verse 8: "These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs." Now that is a very descriptive expression. Jesus is comparing the flow of human history to the contractions that a woman experiences during childbirth. Think about how those are connected. Contractions begin lighter and less frequent, and they gradually become increasingly intense and frequent. In the same way, both the natural and man-made disasters that Jesus describes in these verses will gradually grow more intense and more frequent as we get closer to the end.

There's another part of this picture though, and it's that with contractions (a woman's contractions during childbirth), there are times of peace and calm between the contractions, but those times shorten near the end. Jesus is implying by using this image that the periods of peace and calm on earth will become increasingly hard to find as we get near the end.

And thirdly, by using this picture, He also reminds us that with a woman, the pain of the birth pangs promises (what?) a wonderful outcome; in the case of a woman's contractions, a new baby as we have seen even tonight. In the case of the events Jesus is describing, they will usher in His coming and the birth of a new age. So that's why He uses this image.

And as we work our way through this first section, Jesus gives us a series of signs. Understand that these signs are signs of the end, but they are not perfectly clear signs, and the reason is this. Although all of these signs will occur in great intensity at the very end, they also occur

throughout human history. So when these things happen, Jesus says don't assume that means it's now the end. In fact, look at the end of verse 7. Jesus says: "When you hear [all of these things] ... that is not yet the end." Look at the end of verse 8: "These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs."

Now of course, at some point in the future, these events Jesus describes here will mark the end, but we can't know exactly when that is. So what we read then in verses 5 through 13 are -think of it as- recurring patterns throughout human history that cannot be used as legitimate markers of the end. They are both signs and, at the same time, non-signs.

So let's look at the birth pangs Jesus predicts that will occur throughout human history, but like contractions in a woman giving birth, will occur in relentless and ever-increasing waves of intensity and frequency as we approach the end of the world, the end of time as we know it. First of all, Jesus says when He speaks of these birth pangs, He says there will be false Christs, false prophets, and false predictions.

First of all, look at false Christs here in verses 5 and 6: "Jesus began to say to them, 'See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, "I am He!" and will mislead many.' Jesus is warning His disciples (His true disciples) not to be misled by false Christs. Many will come claiming to be the Messiah, and many will be misled by their claims; not true believers (they hear their Shepherd's voice and respond), but many others will be.

In fact, in Matthew's gospel, the claim of these men is made even clearer. Look at what Matthew says, Matthew 24:5. Here's how he quotes the Lord: "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ [he Messiah],' and will mislead many."

It's interesting. The first recorded false claim to be the Messiah after Jesus' resurrection came from a man named Bar Kokhba. He was the leader of the last Jewish revolt in 132 A.D. Since that time, one Jewish scholar estimates that since (the second century) the beginning of the second century, there have been more than sixty-four men who have arisen claiming to be the Messiah.

As Mike Fabarez reminded us recently, there's even one of those alive today. Jose Luis De Jesus Miranda was born on April 22, 1946 in Puerto Rico. He is the founder and leader of a ministry he calls "Growing in Grace International Ministry" which is based in a warehouse in Miami, Florida.

Miranda claims that in 1973, he had an epiphany. Two years later, he proclaimed himself to be Jesus Christ: "God merged with me, and the resurrected Jesus integrated, infiltrated Himself within me." He claims to be Jesus Christ in the flesh. This man grew up in poverty in Puerto

Rico. He became a Pentecostal minister and later a member of the Southern Baptist Convention. In 2007 the Dallas Morning News ran an article that said he “preaches to followers in some 35 nations mostly in Latin America, has 287 radio programs and a 24-hour Spanish language TV network. His radio broadcasts are heard in over 103 countries. He has his own satellite channel and his own radio station. He has 355 training centers in 30 nations. Miranda travels with a security team of nine bodyguards.”

You say how does a man who claims to be the true Messiah develop a following like that? Well, listen to his message. He is a true libertine. He teaches that the devil, hell, and sin (this is convenient) are non-existent; the Ten Commandments, along with all moral and ethical guidelines, are irrelevant. So you can live however you want. No wonder he has followers and lots of them. That’s a very appealing message. Jose will not be the last to claim to be Jesus Christ. In fact, according to the true Christ in this passage, such claims will only increase. Jesus also warned of false prophets.

In Matthew 24:11: “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.” Those who claim to be representing God, but speaking error and falsehood, directing God’s people or attempting to direct God’s people away from Him. There will also be false predictions. Luke, in Luke 21 in his record of this great sermon, says this: “And He said, ‘See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, “I am He,” [there’s the claim] and, [their message will be] “The time is near.” (It’s the time).”

He says do not go after them. Don’t follow them. Don’t believe them. Don’t follow them. Jesus says just be aware it’s coming. You may not have ever heard of Miranda, but as time goes on, you will hear of more and more people who claim to be the true Christ. Jesus told us it would be true.

There’s a second sign that will occur throughout history and with greater frequency and intensity as we reach the end. Not only will there be false Christs and prophets and predictions, but there will also be war. Look at verses 6- 7. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

You know, it’s really remarkable that Jesus said this when He said it because when Jesus spoke these words, the Roman Empire was enjoying what was called the “Pax Romana,” the great period of Roman peace when the Roman Empire ruled the world, the inhabited world in that portion of the Mediterranean. But that peace would soon come to an end. Four decades after Jesus spoke these words, Rome would have four emperors in less than one year’s time. And with all of that came an end to the peace.



Jesus says: “Whenever you hear of wars;” that is, when you hear about wars that are currently raging. You know, human history is written in the blood of its warriors. Study human history and it’s a story of war, a story of battle. Historians Will and Ariel Durant, in their book entitled “The Lessons of History,” write this: “War is one of the constants of history and has not diminished with civilization and democracy. In the last 3,421 years of recorded history, only 268 have seen no war.”

Other historians have estimated that since the time of Jesus Christ, there have been almost 15,000 wars. In the twentieth century alone (just last century), historians estimate that close to 150 million people died in war. Right now as we sit here tonight, there are twelve wars raging around this planet that are causing more than a 1000 deaths per year. And there are more than 30 such conflicts if you consider those ongoing armed conflicts with less than a 1000 deaths per year.

Jesus says whenever you hear of wars, or He adds whenever you hear of rumors of wars. Not only when you hear that there are actual wars going on, but when you hear that war might be coming, war might be impending, threatening, soon to happen – don’t be frightened. That means don’t be alarmed. Don’t allow the war you hear about, the wars you hear about, or the threat of war you hear about to upset your own emotional peace and calm so that you lose sight of your mission as a Christian.

You know, this is so pertinent even tonight, isn’t it? As we sit here tonight, the peace of the Middle East and of the entire world is at a very precarious level. Iran seems driven to create nuclear weapons. The United States and most of the rest of the world seems determined to prevent that, primarily at this point through the use of economic sanctions. Israel, faced with the possibility of annihilation, is preparing (you’ve probably read as I have) for a military strike inside Iran. She’s even having drills within her country preparing her people for the inevitable retaliation that will come. These are the events of which world wars are made. The truth is it is not unlikely that, in our lifetimes, our planet will experience another world war. In fact, the image Jesus uses here of birth pangs implies that both the intensity and the frequency of war will increase on this planet.

But Jesus says to us, when you hear of wars, when you hear of rumors of wars, don’t be frightened. Why? Well, Jesus gives us two reasons not to be afraid. Look at verse 7.

He says: “*those things* must take place...” Literally, the Greek text says: “It is necessary to happen.” Certainly that’s true because of human depravity. Human depravity always brings conflict and war, but I think Jesus means more than that. I think He’s saying when He says it’s necessary for these things to happen, He’s saying don’t be afraid because this is all part of God’s

sovereign purpose and eternal plan. Trust Him. The world is not out of control, even if it feels like it is.

And then He gives another reason in verse 7: “but *that is* not yet the end...” Actual wars, impending wars, have always been and will always be a part of human history. It’s an expression of man’s fallenness (read James 4). And it will continue to be true until the end of human history. In verse 8 Jesus continues: “For nation will rise up against nation...”

Until the end of this age, there will be wars between individual nations. And there will be wars between kingdoms, kingdom against kingdom – large empires fighting with other large powerful empires. It’s going to happen. So wars and rumors of wars are not a clear sign that marks the end; instead, they will mark the entire age in which we live.

There’s a third sign Jesus identifies. It’s natural disasters. Look at the second half of verse 8: “There will be earthquakes in various places, and there will also be famines.” Earthquakes in various places – from the USGS website, the geological services here in the States, they estimate that several million earthquakes occur in the world each year, several million each year. Many go undetected because they hit remote areas or have very small magnitudes. But every year on average, 165 major earthquakes above 0.6 on the Richter scale rock this planet; and every year at least one greater than 8.0 on the Richter scale strike the planet.

I was really shocked to discover as I was doing a little research on this on their website that twice in the last ten years (two times in the last ten years), the annual death toll from earthquakes has been in one case greater than 200,000 people and in another year greater than 325,000 people. We have primarily tornadoes and hurricanes, but we don’t experience earthquakes the way most of the world experiences it except for California of course, although we have and will.

The earth violently shakes as the tectonic plates that make up its crust collide and shift. When Sheila and I lived in California, not liking earthquakes – we were raised in the South, moved out there. That’s not my favorite thing. Of course, you know, I know God’s in control, and we’re good with that, but I’d rather know what’s coming and have a chance to, you know, prepare myself rather than be awakened at 4:19 a.m. with a major earthquake. But, but after the Northridge quake hit (and we had a lot of damage in our little townhome – we had, I think, ten thousand dollars’ worth of damage just inside our little townhome. And after that), we decided to protest. So we got shirts that we finally stopped wearing because no one got them. The shirt said: ‘Stop Plate Tectonics.’ Think about that for a moment. Earthquakes, Jesus says, will become an increasing reality as this decaying planet groans under the curse that it’s been subjected to.

Verse 8 says there will also be famines. In a normal year (just in an average year), about 25,000 people die every day of hunger or hunger-related causes according to the United Nations

website. That's one person every three-and-a-half seconds. This too will increase as we approach the end.

Luke adds one other natural disaster in Luke 21:11 – “there will be ... in various places plagues.” The Greek word describes a fatal epidemic disease, like the Bubonic plague that swept Europe and the world in the 14th century and killed 100 million people. Between 30% and 60% of the population of Europe died.

The same thing has happened even nearer our own lifetime. If you want an interesting read, (and my kids still give me a hard time about reading this on vacation) but there's a book called “The Great Influenza.” It documents the influenza epidemic that occurred during the First World War. Most people really lost sight of it because of the world war. But during the First World War, there was a great influenza epidemic that went to pneumonia and went to pneumonia quickly. It's estimated that 50 to 100 million people died, five to ten times more than died during the First World War during the battles.

You know, in our pride, the modern world thinks it's essentially put an end to such epidemics. But from time to time, we're reminded that we are not without being affected by that. The SARS virus, the deadly strain of the Asian bird flu, reminds us that we are not immune from worldwide plagues. And in fact, Jesus implies that such plagues will actually increase in frequency and in intensity.

But notice what Jesus says about all these things at the end of verse 8: “These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.” Wow! Think about that for a moment. Everything Jesus mentions in these verses that we have studied together have occurred from His ascension until now. And they will continue to occur in increasing waves of intensity until the tribulation period and through the tribulation period. But what has already happened and what will happen in our world until that seven-year tribulation begins are not even real contractions. The wars, the rumors of wars, the earthquakes, the famines, the plagues that have already occurred and those that are yet to occur before the tribulation comes are best likened to Braxton Hicks contractions.

They are not signs of the end. They are not even signs of the beginning of the end. They are simply reminders that one day the same events will occur in much greater frequency and much greater intensity. Then and only then will be the beginning of the real birth pangs. In fact, next time Lord willing, I want to take you to Revelation and show you how the very things Jesus describes here overlay on the first few seals that are described in the book of Revelation. That's when the real birth pangs begin; everything until then – they're Braxton Hicks.

Lane, a commentator on this passage, writes: “Jesus’ word provided assurance that these events fall within the purpose of God. Their task (the disciples’ task) is to be vigilant so as not to be led astray, and to refuse to be disturbed by contemporary events which are in God’s control.”

There’s one other reality that will occur throughout human history and intensify near the end. It’s intense persecution recorded in verses 9 through 13. And Lord willing, we’ll look at that next week.

But as we finish our time this evening, I just want to challenge you. How do we respond to what our Lord has shared here? It’s heavy, isn’t it? I mean, it’s, it’s not fun. It’s not pleasing to think about, but this is the reality. This is what our Lord said was coming. How do we respond to that?

First of all, don’t be surprised. These things will continue to happen. And don’t be surprised if they increase in intensity and frequency. That’s what our Lord said would happen; if not during our lifetimes (although I think that’s possible), certainly they will at some point.

Secondly, don’t be afraid. God is on His throne. This is His world. “This is My Father’s World.” He will do what He has determined to do. Nothing will happen outside of His great, sovereign eternal purpose. So Jesus says don’t be frightened. Don’t be afraid. You pick up the newspaper tomorrow and the third world war of our time here in the U.S. begins – don’t be frightened. God is on His throne. Jesus said this would happen.

Thirdly, don’t be deceived. Don’t let some “signs of the time” preacher start connecting the events that are happening with the end of the world because we can’t know for sure. These things will happen. They happened since Jesus left. They will continue to happen until the end, and we can’t know exactly when the end comes.

But that leads us to the fourth: don’t be unprepared. Don’t be unprepared. If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, read the last part of this chapter where we’re told to be prepared. We’re going to get there. If you’re not a Christian, if as you sit here tonight you have never come to a place in your own life where you have repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ, I plead with you: “Don’t face the future that Jesus Himself predicted unprepared.” He will make these things happen.

I plead with you to acknowledge Him as your Lord. Bow your knee to Him. Accept Him as Savior and Lord before the end begins. Don’t be unprepared. The question for you tonight is are you truly right with God through His Son, Jesus Christ? Jesus says: “These are merely the beginning of birth pangs.” Let’s pray together.

Father, thank You for the fact that You haven't left us without a roadmap of the future. Thank You that that means You have sovereignly determined what will come to pass, and we don't have to be afraid. But Father, thank You that You've informed us through our Lord that You've given us this information. Help us to live in the light of it. Father, loosen our grip from the stuff around us, from the things that are so unimportant in the scope of what we've studied tonight.

Lord, help us to focus our hearts and lives on the things that are eternal – on Christ, on His Word, on His church, on people, and ultimately on You. Father, remind us that this world and everything in it will one day be completely consumed by fire. So don't let us live our lives pouring all of our energy into stuff that's going to be destroyed, stuff that we can't take with us when we leave this life in death or at the rapture.

Father, help us to live for eternity. Remind us that You will do what You promised. Lord, remind us of the days of Noah when they were marrying and given in marriage and saying: "Nothing's ever going to happen. It never has." And then came the flood. Lord, remind us that what Jesus has described will come as well. And help us, O God, to live in the light of it.

I pray, Father, for those here tonight who don't know Jesus Christ, who have never recognized Him as Lord and Savior. Lord, help them to see that they really have a choice – either to acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord now, or to one day face His full fury, what the apostle John calls "the wrath of the Lamb." Father, I pray that they would choose to bow their knee and submit themselves to Jesus Christ as Lord. We pray this in His great name. Amen.