

Main Idea: In Mark 13:1-8 Jesus makes two predictions and then teaches us about what He calls “the beginning of birth pains.”

- I. Jesus tells what’s going to happen to the temple (1-2).
    - A. The disciples saw buildings (1).
      1. Herod’s temple was impressive.
      2. Herod’s temple was the pride of the Jews.
    - B. Jesus saw what would happen to the buildings (2).
      1. Our problem is that we’re too easily impressed.
      2. Make sure what impresses you now will be impressive in 100 years.
  - II. Jesus tells what’s going to happen to the world (3-8).
    - A. The disciples asked questions about the future (3-4).
      1. They wanted to know **when**.
      2. They wanted to know **what**.
    - B. The Lord stressed our need for discernment in the present (5-8).
      1. He warned His followers to look out for deceivers (5).
      2. He predicted that deceivers would have great success (6).
      3. He revealed several pre-end time events (7-8).
        - a. There will be wars and rumors of wars.
        - b. There will be conflicts between nations and kingdoms.
        - c. There will be earthquakes and famines.
      4. He called these “the beginning of birth pains” (8b).
- Take Inventory: Am I living in light of what’s coming?
1. What’s impressive to the world doesn’t impress God.
  2. What’s impressive to the world shouldn’t impress us.
  3. What should impress us is Christ.

Before I read today’s Scripture reading, I want to let you know we’re going to hit the pause button on our current series in Jesus’ sermon on the mount, and during August explore a theme Jesus emphasized in the beatitudes. A great incentive for godly living in the present is knowing what’s coming in the future.

*Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:1-4*

Would you agree that the commands of Jesus are important? If Jesus says to do something, obedience is vital. In His great commission the Master told the eleven, “Go and make disciples, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

So Jesus’ commands are important. We need to know them, obey them, and teach others to do the same. Our obedience brings Him pleasure, and us joy.

What are some of Jesus’ commands that first come to your mind? Perhaps...

Be reconciled to your brother (Matt 5:24).

If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also (Matt 5:39).

Love your enemies (Matt 5:44).

Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5:48).

When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Matt 6:3).

When you pray, do not be like pagans (Matt 6:7).

Seek first the kingdom of God (Matt 6:33).

Do not worry (Matt 6:25).

Do not judge (Matt 7:1).

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series, 9/10/06.

Ask and it will be given you (Matt 7:7).

Enter through the narrow gate (Matt 7:13).

Those are Jesus' commands, and He gave them to His followers in His sermon on the mount, which He delivered during the first part of His public ministry. You've probably heard those commands before. They're talked about a lot.

But there are other commands of Jesus we don't hear much. Like these...

*Stay awake. Be on guard. Watch out. Be alert.*

Jesus delivered these commands to His followers at the end of His earthly ministry, in fact, right before His crucifixion.

*Stay awake. Be on guard. Watch out. Be alert.*

The church today needs these commands. I need them. We who are bombarded by materialism in the affluent west need them. Our persecuted brothers in North Korea need them.

*Stay awake. Be on guard. Watch out. Be alert.*

I don't mean, stay awake in a church service, although that's important. I'm talking about the pointed commands Jesus delivered in His final sermon, known as "The Olivet Discourse," which Matthew records (chs 24-25), as does Luke (ch 21), and Mark (ch 13). Jesus is telling His followers what to do as the end approaches.

*Stay awake (37, 35). Be on guard (33). Watch out (5). Be alert (33).*

This is a controversial sermon. Jesus is giving the signs of the end of the age. Or is He? We'll be talking about that. But what are not controversial are the commands. They are black and white, and they are what Jesus' sermon is all about.

When a Bible text tells us about the future, it's intended to produce a powerful effect on how we live in the present. Eschatology is for living.

If you want a title for this series, here it is. "*Stay Awake: The End Is Coming.*" This is a prophetic text, and according to Jesus, if we respond rightly to it, we'll stay awake. We're going to spend three weeks or so listening to Jesus in Mark 13, and this morning we'll begin by listening to what Jesus has to say about what He calls "the beginning of birth pains" in verses 1-8.

Birth pains tell us something big is coming. Big pain. Big joy. In that order. What are these birth pains? We'll find out.

In Mark 13 Jesus teaches about the future. There's something else significant about Mark 13. It's hard to understand! William Barclay sums up the challenge, "Mark 13 is one of the most difficult chapters in the New Testament for a modern reader to understand." Then he suggests a reason why. "That is because it is one of the most Jewish chapters in the Bible...All through it Jesus is using categories and pictures which were very familiar to the Jews of his day, but which are very strange, and indeed, unknown, to many modern readers."<sup>2</sup>

The Lord willing, we're going to take three weeks to unfold this important chapter. Our focus this morning will be the first eight verses. It's there that Jesus makes two predictions and then teaches us about what He calls "the beginning of birth pains."

### I. Jesus tells what's going to happen to the temple (1-2).

Notice verse 1—"As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!'"

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<sup>2</sup> Barclay, p. 303.

Jesus is leaving the temple<sup>3</sup> where He has been on the hot-seat for two chapters now, responding to His hostile critics. The cross is but a day or so away. One of His disciples—we're not told which one—got excited about something. Matthew's account indicates the other disciples were impressed as well. By what? By what they *saw*.

**A. The disciples saw buildings (1).** “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” They're talking about the temple complex. And they're not exaggerating. The stones were massive and the buildings were magnificent.

*1. Herod's temple was impressive.* It was actually considered one of the great wonders of the Roman world.

At this point we need some background if we're going to appreciate fully what the disciples are saying and feel the force of Jesus' response.

This was actually the third Jewish temple. Indeed, to go back even further, first there was the tabernacle which basically was a tent where God met with His people and His people sacrificed offerings to Him. Ten centuries B.C. King David believed God deserved something better, a permanent house, and his son, Solomon, replaced the tabernacle with the first temple. That temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. and later rebuilt in the fifth century in Ezra's day. Often referred to as “Zerubbabel's temple, the second temple was a much smaller than the first.

Over time the second temple fell into disrepair and so the third temple came about (actually a renovation and major expansion of the second). The third temple was by far the most beautiful. It's called “Herod's temple” and the building of it began in 19 B.C. The purpose of the project wasn't so much to bring glory to God as to reconcile the Jews to their Idumaean king, Herod the Great. Although the main structure was finished within ten years, work continued until 64 A.D.

Since Jerusalem sits on a mountain, Herod had to carve away rock in order to flatten out an area on which to build the massive complex. The size of the temple area was about 500 yards north to south and 325 yards east to west.<sup>4</sup>

According to Josephus some of the stones were forty feet long by twelve feet high and eighteen feet wide<sup>5</sup>—the size of boxcars on a train! No wonder Jesus' disciple was impressed! “What massive stones!” Indeed, they were.

And the comment about the buildings being “magnificent” was true as well. From a distance the temple mount looked like a mountain of gold. The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, described the sight:

“The exterior of the building wanted nothing that could astound mind or eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white.”<sup>6</sup>

Yes, Herod's temple was impressive. It's not surprising then that...

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<sup>3</sup> The verb is significant. Jesus just condemned the temple for the hypocrisy He saw there (see 12:41-44; see also Matthew 23). Now He *leaves* it for it will no longer be necessary. The cross is the next event. This temple will soon be obsolete.

<sup>4</sup> 35 acres. About the size of Lowes with its surrounding parking lot??

<sup>5</sup> That's the height and width of the side wall in this auditorium.

<sup>6</sup> Josephus, quoted in Kent Hughes, p. 136.

2. *Herod's temple was the pride of the Jews.* Indeed, this was the most spectacular building in Jerusalem. Today, the Wailing Wall (a section that remains not from the temple itself but from a wall in the complex) is the pride of the Jews.

Was it out of national pride that this disciple called attention to the stones and buildings of the temple? I think it was more than that. In Matthew's account we discover a background to this disciple's comment. Just before leaving the temple that day, Jesus said these words recorded in Matthew 23:37-38:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate."

Desolate? Did Jesus say Jerusalem's "house" (the temple) was or would be *desolate*? Yes, He said that. But to the disciples, it sure didn't look desolate. And with the size of those stones, it was hard to imagine it ever becoming desolate. Did they hear Jesus correctly? Perhaps that's why one of them pointed out the impressive nature of the temple.

The disciples saw buildings. That's what impressed them. *Buildings.*

Keep in mind that Jesus is on His way to the cross. He is about to fulfill the mission His Father gave Him, to rescue sinners by means of His death as their substitute. He's going to form those rescued sinners into a new people by the power of His resurrection. He has come to do something radically new, something rooted in the old forms of Judaism and even foreshadowed in those forms (including the temple). And through His perfect life, death and resurrection, He is fulfilling the intent of those old forms.

Yet the disciples are still captivated by the old. What they see are *buildings*. The here and now. Jesus, on the other hand, saw something they didn't see.

**B. Jesus saw what would happen to the buildings (2).** Hear Him speak: "'Do you see all these great buildings?' replied Jesus. 'Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.'"

Talk about a conversation stopper! "Yes, I see the buildings," Jesus said. "But I also see that these impressive buildings are coming down, every last stone."

Why did Jesus say that? For many reasons. The most obvious one is that's what was going to happen! And it did. In A.D. 70—just forty years after Jesus uttered this prophecy—the Roman general Titus attacked and conquered Jerusalem. He killed one million Jews and demolished the temple, first gutting it by fire and then by razing it to the ground so that not one stone was left in place.

But let's not miss a perhaps less than obvious reason Jesus burst His disciples bubble. With those stunning words He is exposing a problem His disciples had in the present—and we share it with them. It's this...

1. *Our problem is that we're too easily impressed.* For the disciples it was a building complex. For us, it could be a job or a degree or a house or something else.

You can tell a lot about people by noticing *what impresses them*. Change that. You can tell a lot about *yourself* but taking note of what impresses *you*. It's so easy to be impressed by things that matter very little in the light of eternity, things like a bigger house, latest style clothing, a new car with all the bells and whistles, and so on.

Don't misunderstand. There's nothing inherently wrong with a new house, or clothes, or a car. Stuff is stuff. God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment," as 1 Timothy 6:17 states. The problem isn't the material objects. Our problem, simply put, is that as sinners we are too easily *impressed*. We attach value that

is way out of proportion to things, to *stuff* that really has little value in the light of eternity.

I say *we* because this tendency affects *every* human being. Part of what it means to be a sinner is that we are prone to be too easily impressed. Isn't that what happened to Adam and Eve. They lived in a garden filled with delights and enjoyed perfect fellowship with God Himself, yet fell for the lie that a bite of forbidden fruit would bring greater satisfaction.

What is it that people who are too easily impressed need? What's the remedy? We find the answer in Mark 13. Simply stated, it boils down to this. We need to *learn to live in light of the future*.

The One who created the mountains isn't impressed by a few rocks, no matter how big they are. And we who know Him shouldn't be either. The solution? Jesus will develop the solution more fully in the following verses, but here's where it begins...

2. *Make sure what impresses you now will be impressive in 100 years.* A few years ago our car was sitting in the driveway when the wind caught the concrete-filled basketball pole and dropped it—you guessed it—right on the car! If you think an \$70,000 pickup truck is impressive, just wait a hundred years. A hundred years ago people were impressed by the guy with the nicest horse-drawn buggy!

The point is, we must make sure that what impresses us now is worthy of that affection. Sure the temple buildings are impressive, but they won't be, and soon. They're going to be rubble.

This past Monday evening Sherry and I were visiting with friends on a beautiful boat in the bay next to Sarasota. Talk about impressive. We went by some incredible showcase homes. One of them stood out. They told us who it belonged to, a well known woman in Florida. I asked how much it was worth. Fifteen million was the answer. The next day Sherry googled the woman's name and found out her husband had committed suicide in that mansion.

Friends, I'll say it again. Make sure that what impresses you now will be impressive in 100 years. Follow Paul's example in in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, *but on what is unseen*. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

We're so prone to be impressed by the temporal, by the things we can *see*. And that's not just wealthy people. Any hoarders in the room? Anybody who struggles to see things change? The temporal can be pretty impressive to all of us. But Jesus says we need a perspective change. This brings us to scene two.

## II. Jesus tells what's going to happen to the world (3-8).

Verses 3-4—"As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives [keep in mind this is where Jesus will return at His second coming, Zechariah 14:4] opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?'"

From the disciples' vantage point on the Mount of Olives, the temple was in clear view across the Kidron Valley. Jesus' shocking announcement prompts four of the men to approach Jesus for clarification.

### **A. The disciples asked questions about the future (3-4).** Basically two questions.

1. *They wanted to know **when**.* When will your prediction take place? And...
2. *They wanted to know **what**.* What sign will indicate the time is at hand?

They know Jesus is talking about the future. That's clear. What's not so clear is how far in the future.

Here's where the controversy enters. Some Bible interpreters believe the events described in Mark 13 were fulfilled in the next forty years, culminating with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. For instance, this is R. C. Sproul's<sup>7</sup> position<sup>8</sup>, whose teaching I highly respect.<sup>9</sup>

And while there are elements in Jesus' prophecy that were fulfilled in the near future, I believe there are also elements that point to the far distant future, even to the very end.

It seems to me that the disciples have concluded Jesus is talking about the judgment at end of the age. The Jews divided history up into two ages, *this age* followed by *the age to come*. They believed this age of suffering would end with a time of great distress, after which the Messiah would come and establish His Messianic kingdom. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus has come. They thus conclude Jesus is talking about the end of the present age. *When* will it happen, they want to know—this week, next year, *when?* And *what sign* will indicate You are ready to judge the world and establish Your kingdom, Jesus?

In response to the disciples' request for information about the future...

**B. The Lord stressed our need for discernment in the present (5-8).** "Jesus said to them: 'Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 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.'"

The disciples wanted a sign. But rather than a sign Jesus gave them a host of exhortations and warnings concerning the trials that lay before them (there are nineteen commands in His response in Mark 13).

1. *He warned His followers to look out for deceivers (5).* "Watch out!" He says in verse 5. "You must be on your guard," He reemphasizes in verse 9. And in verse 23, "Be on your guard." And in verse 33, "Be on guard! Be alert!" And in verse 35, "Keep watch!" And His final word in verse 37, "Watch!"

Watch for what? Verse 5 again, for *deceivers*. Watch out for those who are going to try and trick you and mislead you. In verse 6...

2. *He predicted that deceivers would have great success (6).* Note the first and last word of verse 6. It's the same word. "**Many** will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive **many**."

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<sup>7</sup> R. C. Sproul, "It is clear that we do not have to look beyond AD 70 to find a fulfillment of all Jesus spoke about in the Olivet Discourse to this point. All of these signs were displayed in the years and days leading up to the fall of Jerusalem." <https://ref.ly/o/marksproul/655861?length=231> via @Logos

<sup>8</sup> R. C. Sproul, "There is no question that this passage is difficult to interpret in its context. It has been a source of disagreement among Christians for centuries and will continue to be so. Yet, I contend that it need not be interpreted as referring to the end of history. It can be understood as referring to the cataclysmic events that occurred in AD 70." <https://ref.ly/o/marksproul/664404?length=343> via @Logos

<sup>9</sup> R. C. Sproul, "I personally believe that we must understand the time-frame references in the Olivet Discourse in a literal sense and Jesus' coming in a figurative sense. In short, I believe that Jesus was not talking about His final coming at the end of the age, but about His coming in power and in judgment on His own people, which occurred in AD 70. In my judgment, this is the most natural and consistent way to interpret this text, and it vindicates Jesus as a true prophet and Scripture as absolutely reliable." <https://ref.ly/o/marksproul/669568?length=501> via @Logos

The deceivers Jesus has in mind will use *His* name. I take that to mean that in some cases they will claim to be Christ, in other cases they will claim to speak for Christ.

And what Jesus predicted occurred as predicted. It occurred in the first century, for prior to the destruction of the temple in AD 70, many false messiahs appeared.<sup>10</sup>

But it occurred in the second century too. Bar-Cochba claimed full Messiahship and led many Jews astray. And it's still occurring in our day, as a host of religious teachers claim to be God's anointed who offer the way to God.

*Many* will come, the Lord predicted. And deceive *many*.

Let me give you a mathematic equation.

*Deception + Lack of discernment = Disaster*

That deceivers will come is inevitable. Jesus told us so. But if we are going to stand, Jesus said we must *watch out*. We must exercise *discernment*, or there will be disaster.

Sadly, this is the very thing that today's church seems to lack. *Discernment*. We're almost encouraged to believe that anyone who calls himself a 'Christian' (who uses Christ's name) is genuine. Not to do is judgmental, isn't it?

And so we have "Christian" music, and "Christian" businesses, and "Christian" schools, and "Christian" homes. How do we know they're Christian? Because they SAY they are.

But is a musician a Christian because he uses the name of Christ in his songs? Is a businessman a Christian because he prays in Jesus' name before he has lunch with clients? Is a family "Christian" because it has a red letter Bible on the coffee table?

*Watch out!* said Jesus, as He warns His followers to look out for people who would use His name in deceptive ways.

I hear people say, "Oh, churches are pretty much the same, as long as they believe in Christ."

But they aren't. The Christ in many mainline churches is not the Christ of the Bible. According to their own statements, He was not born of a virgin, did not shed His blood to pay the penalty for sinners, did not rise again physically from the dead, is not the only way to heaven as He claimed, and is not returning to earth again in bodily form.

R. Alan Cole's observation is right, "To worship Christ with false beliefs about Him is to worship a false Christ, by whatever name we call Him."<sup>11</sup>

The New Testament is filled with warnings similar to this one by Jesus. Paul said that deceivers would come into churches (Acts 20:29-31). So did Peter (2 Pet. 2:1, 20-21). And Jude doesn't say they *will* come but that they *have* come (past tense) for by his day, just one generation after Jesus gave this prophecy, they were inside the church (see Jude 4).

The last of the apostles, John, echoed the same warning over and over (1 John 2:26; 3:7; 3:10; 4:1-3) and his words in 2 John 7-11 are alarming: "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world.<sup>12</sup> Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this

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<sup>10</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Mark*, comment on verse 6.

<sup>11</sup> R. Alan Cole, p. 274

<sup>12</sup> Notice the past tense! The deceivers Jesus predicted were out in full force by AD 90

teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.”

Those last words may not be politically correct but they are the Word of God. If we don't keep the church pure, it will cease to exist. It took just one generation for false teachers to infiltrate the early church, just one! Jude says, “They're here!” John says, “They're here!”

What Jesus predicted happened. The deceivers did come in His name and they did lead many astray.

That's not all the Master predicted on the Mount that day, however.

3. *He revealed several pre-end time events (7-8).* “When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 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.”

Note three predictions Jesus made for His disciples...

a. There will be wars and rumors of wars. That's verse 7. And...

b. There will be conflicts between nations and kingdoms. That's verse 8.

Wars have always been with us and will be. Will Durant wrote, “In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war.”<sup>13</sup> Yet it's easy to think that the end of the world is near when war strikes your country. “Don't do that,” Jesus tells His followers. “When you hear of wars, the end is *still to come*.”

Note carefully Jesus' perspective on war. In this sin-cursed world, “Such things must happen,” He said. “But do not be alarmed,” He emphasized. In other words, don't conclude every time war breaks out, “This must be the end of the world!” It's not.

As Christians, we need not be alarmed over international crises. Indeed, our lack of “going to pieces” should stand out in a winsome way to a fretting world. “Let not your hearts be troubled,” Jesus said elsewhere (John 14:1). He told us ahead of time what to expect so we would not be alarmed.

Are you a worrier? Do you fret in fear over the affairs of life? Does, “Oh no! What bad thing is going to happen next?!” describe your mindset? If so, here's the solution.

*Put your trust in the One who is in control.* Believe Him. Believe what He said. He said when you hear of wars, don't be alarmed. Not because wars aren't terrible, for they are. But such things must happen as God's plan to redeem this fallen world unfolds.

Big pain. Then big joy later. That's what's coming. And here's something else that must happen, according to Jesus.

c. There will be earthquakes and famines. Kent Hughes comments, “During the years between Christ's death and the destruction of the Temple, there was a terrible earthquake in Laodicea, Vesuvius buried Pompeii, and there was a famine in Rome itself. This did not mean the end of all things. Neither would it mean the end if California fell into the sea and you could sail to Hawaii from Las Vegas. The truth is, with the rise of every war and earthquake there comes an increase of false Christs who say they have the answer. We are not to be deceived by any of this.”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus predicted what was coming. Wars, rumors of war, international conflicts, earthquakes, and famines. But He made it clear those events do not signal the end.

4. *He called these “the beginning of birth pains” (8b).* That's the end of verse 8, “These are the beginning of birth pains.” Jesus here is using a figure of speech the Old

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Kent Hughes, p. 137.

<sup>14</sup> Kent Hughes, p. 138.



Testament associated with the period right before Messiah's coming. Just like a mother must endure intense agony before delivering the prize of her affection, so God's people must endure intense agony before the long-anticipated Messianic age arrives. The "beginning" of birth pains indicates there will be many more sufferings other than those Jesus just mentioned.

We are living in this time period, my friend, what Jesus called *the beginning of birth pains*. We are living in this time period between the Messiah's first coming and His promised second coming. The wars, rumors of war, international conflicts, earthquakes, and famines we read about in our daily newspapers are *just the beginning* of birth pains.

"You mean it's going to get worse?" you ask.

Yes. "Birth pains" is a figure of speech the prophets used to depict the future time of Israel's ultimate tribulation (in passages like Isaiah 13:6-10 and Micah 4:9-10), the initial phase of the "Day of the Lord" that will precede Messiah's coming to establish His eternal kingdom. The book of Revelation uses another phrase in reference to the coming time of birth pains, calling it "the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14)."

This is what's coming, says Jesus. And He will have more to say about these matters as He continues the message He preached from the Mount of Olives, which, the Lord willing, we'll consider in upcoming weeks.

But as we finish today, let's not miss the point of it all. What did Jesus say is the appropriate response to His revelation about the future?

*Stay awake. Be on guard. Watch out. Be alert.*

#### Take Inventory: Am I living in light of what's coming?

Let's talk about three reminders from Mark 13.

1. *What's impressive to the world doesn't impress God.* Massive buildings are miniscule in the sight of the One who holds planet earth in His hands. We just need to hear this regularly. God is NOT impressed by what the world considers "big."

2. *What's impressive to the world shouldn't impress us.* We don't belong to this world. Our citizenship is in heaven. "Seek first the kingdom of God," said Jesus (Matt. 6:33). "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:2-4)."

Brothers and sisters, what's precious to us the world considers foolish. To the world, the cross of Jesus is an object of scorn and shame. Yet to be saved we know a person must embrace the cross, cherish the cross, be *impressed by the cross*, for on the cross God's own Son took the punishment we deserve. Now on the basis of the cross God offers sinners like us forgiveness. So we cherish the cross.

But it's foolishness to the world, and apart from sovereign grace would be to us. The cross offends good people who are convinced they are okay with God because they are good. But as long as people are impressed with their own goodness they are forfeiting the grace that could be theirs and heading for eternal destruction.

3. *What should impress us is Christ.* There is no more *impressive* person in the universe! Indeed, He is the treasure of all treasures. Is He your treasure?