

末世的征兆（上）——马可福音 13:5-8

Signs of the End Times (Part1)—Mark 13:5-8

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture Reading: Mark 13:1-13; Zechariah 14:1-9

Mark 13: 5-8(NASB1995)

5 And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. 6 Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He!*’ and will mislead many. 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. 8 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.

- “As a sinful, fallen race, we are headed for real trouble. God is going to judge this world harsher and more severe than ever before. Add up all the plagues, all the disasters, all the despots and dictators, all the wars (all of them)—combine them all together, and they will not even come close to what is about to befall this world, your home, your unsaved friends and family in the Tribulation.

And just when things are their worst, Jesus will physically return, those who oppose Him will be taken away, and those who are saved will enter into a literal thousand year return to the Garden of Eden, where Christ will live and rule among us, and God’s glorified saints will rule with Him on this earth.

After a thousand years of utopia, sadly many of the offspring of regular Christians who live on earth will rebel under a final rebellion, and God will end it all, judge all of mankind, and only those in Christ will then enter into eternal Heaven on Earth.” ——conclusion from a pastor.

- Outline:
 - Title: Signs of the End Times (Part 1) —Mark 13:5-8
 - 1. Introduction—What Times Is Jesus Describing?
 - 2. False Christs (vv. 5-6)
 - 3. International Wars (vv. 7-8a)
 - 4. Natural Disasters (v. 8b)

Introduction—What Times Is Jesus Describing?

- “beginning of birth pangs” (v. 8): This phrase is a key clue, also rendered “labor pains” as in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. This metaphor is used to describe the final tribulations of the end times. What’s the point of this metaphor? Labor pains, though painful, are meaningful and worth

enduring. The point of labor pains is not the pain itself but the joy of new life that follows. Similarly, the end-time tribulations signal the imminent birth of the kingdom of God.

- The Old Testament is full of such prophecies—after the great tribulation, God will come to save His people (Isaiah 24–25, Daniel 11, Zechariah 14, Ezekiel 38–39, and many others).
- Another key aspect of the birth pangs metaphor is the increasing intensity within a short period of time. The pains come wave after wave, growing more severe until it becomes unbearable, and then comes the child. This is also how the end-time tribulations will unfold.
- The tribulations mentioned in this passage include earthquakes, famines, and wars, all of which are familiar to us even today. So, some say we're already living in the end times. If we were already in the end times in the sense of this passage, then the birth pangs would've already lasted for millennia—far too long for a normal labor. If what we have now were indeed the final birth pangs, then we'd expect to see the child coming very soon.
- The best explanation: Jesus is referring to the period right before His return, with disasters of unprecedented scale and intensity (v. 19). These are the final birth pangs just before the arrival of God's kingdom, which Daniel and Revelation describe as the seven-year tribulation, especially the latter half of that period which is three and a half years of great tribulation. It is variously referred to as "half of the seventieth week," "1,260 days," "forty-two months," and "a time, times, and half a time," all equating to three and a half years.
- Yes, we do see earthquakes, famines, and wars today, but they are at most some false labor pains or the morning sickness in early pregnancy. These minor disturbances are nothing compared to the final birth pangs. If today's disasters already make us tremble, the suffering of those enduring the great tribulation is totally unimaginable.

【Application】 We should strive to make sure that we won't enter that great tribulation, but to be taken up to be with the Lord before it begins. Every time we see catastrophic news reports, we should view them as reminders from God that He has not forgotten His promises. Everything is under His control, and His timeline is never off.

False Christs (vv. 5-6)

- "See to it": This command is repeated four times in this discourse (vv. 5, 9, 23, 33, though variously translated in NASB version). Eschatology is a topic that requires watchfulness.
- "That no one misleads you": Without watchfulness, we'll be easily misled. There are many deceptions even today; some are pretty obvious and easy to see. But in the tribulation, Satan's deceptions will be far more shrewd (v. 22). Revelation 13:3 says the Antichrist will even bear a sign of resurrection, similar to Jesus' wounds from the cross. When someone like this appears, pretending to be Christ, it'll be far more dangerous and deceptive than ever before.

【Application】 How can we be watchful? The most important key is to be familiar with the Bible's teaching on the end times. Watchfulness means to watch — to spot out the deceivers by examining their teachings and lives to see if they align with the Bible's teachings regarding the end times.

【Example】 If we're familiar with the teaching that the date of Christ's return is unknowable, we can easily guard against those predicting dates. Many heresies such as Jehovah's Witnesses all began with date predictions. If people had heeded Jesus' own teaching, they would've immediately judged these claims as false.

- "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many": The numerous false messiahs throughout history bear witness to the accuracy of Jesus' prophecy. They don't just predict dates; many have the audacity to claim themselves as the Christ. Wikipedia lists at least 51 false Christs who have appeared since Jesus, from places like the US, Middle East, China, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Croatia, Ethiopia, and so on...

【Examples】 The Eastern Lightning cult (with two million followers hailing a lunatic woman Yang Xiangbin as "the female Christ reincarnate", whose extramarital lover Zhao Weishan claims to be her "high priest"), the Rastafari movement (which regards former Ethiopian president Haile Selassie I as the "returned Christ"; although he has been dead for nearly half a century, a million followers still believe in him), and many others... Despite the obvious ridiculousness, they still get millions of people to fall for their lies. Why? Because the Bible is absolutely true and reliable. Jesus has long said that such things will happen.

International Wars (vv. 7-8a)

- "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars": In one sense, all human wars are signs of the end.
- "But the end is not yet": However, current wars do not mean we are in the final end times yet.

【Interpretation】 Strictly speaking, the wars mentioned here refer to the wars during the seven-year tribulation, and "the end" refers to the final end, that is, the glorious kingdom after the tribulation where believers are saved. This is the "end" the disciples had been longing for. If the entire tribulation is called the "end," then what the disciples longed for is the "end of the end."

- "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom": "Nation" refers to democratic countries, and "kingdom" refers to monarchies. Whatever form of government, no country can escape the end-time wars—because the issue is not governance, but human sin!

James 4:1 "What is the source of **quarrels** and **conflicts** among you? Is not **the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?**"

【Example】 World War I (1914–1918) claimed approximately 40 million lives. World War II (1937–1945) resulted in nearly 200 million deaths. World War III has not yet happened, but

rumors have long been circulating—Cold War, nuclear weapons, Russo-Ukraine war—many see these as preludes to a third world war.

Natural Disasters (v. 8b)

- "In various places there will be famines and earthquakes": Luke adds "plagues, and terrors and great signs from heaven." The "signs from heaven" clearly include phenomena like solar and lunar eclipses.

【Example】 Speaking of plagues, who isn't aware of the devastating power of pandemics in recent years?

Revelation 6:8 "I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth."

Revelation 16:18-19 "And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell..."

Conclusion and Application

How do we apply this message today? The text itself has given us a clear application—"See to it that no one misleads you." *How can we see to it? Only by becoming familiar with the teaching of the whole Bible.*