

“Standing on His Word”

Text: Mark 13:1-13

Martin Luther said: “God’s Word alone is the truer, abiding rock on which a person can depend with certainty.” He added that depending upon anything else was like building on quicksand. The more one may try to gain a footing, the deeper they sink and the quicker they fall.

Our Lord Jesus made a similar statement when he talked about the wise and foolish builders. He said: “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like the wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24-25) The story continued that the foolish man built his house upon the sand and it fell and its fall was great.

Our test includes another discussion on foundations. For one, the Temple was very impressive in appearance, but it would be throne down. The other occurrence is the word of God that is a foundation that will last forever. We have that foundation as we are-

STANDING ON HIS WORD

I. The foundations of the world are uncertain

II. God’s promise is our assurance

I.

A.1. What an impressive sight the Temple must have been! We can only imagine! It was a massive building, or actually a set of buildings. Some of the stones may have

been up to forty feet long and twelve feet high! This was Herod's Temple, the third a final temple of Israel.

The Temple was a vital part of Israel's worship and community life. The Temple was the place of God's presence for the people of God. As important and significant as this building was to the Jews, it would not stand. Why? Because something greater than the Temple was now here, as Jesus stated on another occasion, in speaking of himself. (Matthew 12:6)

2. During the Jewish war of 70 A.D., the Romans destroyed this impressive building. It would be totally demolished just as Jesus said it would be. Standing on the site today, nothing really can be seen.

This prophecy of Jesus reminds us that it is foolish to base our faith on the objects of this world. While buildings, governments and possessions may be impressive, they will not last. They are doomed to destruction. As the disciples received this news they were certainly startled. They wanted to know what the signs would be for this great event. Since the Temple was to be destroyed, in their minds that meant the end of the world.

B.1. Many times as we see war, bloodshed and natural disasters, we too may think that the end of the world is coming. As Jesus relates these events to his disciples, they are actually two events. One is the destruction of the Temple which would happen not long after these words were spoken.

The second part of this discourse referred to as the *Olivet Discourse* is about the end of the world. This had not happened yet as we know. The words that Jesus spoke are fitting both today as they were in the day of speaking to his disciples. The two events are not connected. On day there would be wars and rumors of wars, as well as natural disasters and they are with us today as well.

2. Wars continue today as we see in Iraq and Afghanistan and other parts of the world. Great natural

disasters like Hurricane Ida and various others occur. These do not signal the end of the world. The world definitely will end, but by God's time and design. Jesus tells us something very important: "And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations." God is not the angry judge waiting to annihilate the world. He wants all to know his salvation. When he is satisfied with that being accomplished, then the end of the world will come.

The good news of the gospel is so important to us and for others to know. We live in a hostile world. The world stands opposed to Jesus Christ and all who follow him. The gospel brings us the comfort of sins forgiven and a full life now even in the face of all this hostility. This is our unshaken foundation on which we stand.

II.

A.1. As Jesus spoke these words these events were happening and are happening today. First there was the matter of the false messiahs and prophets. Jesus warned the disciples that those who came, claiming to be Jesus should not deceive them. In fact, the historian Paul Maier writes that there were many false prophets who appeared at the time that the Temple was destroyed.

Of course, it is just as Jesus warned. They have appeared in our day as well: Sun Yung Moon, Jim Jones, David Koresh and others. In order to not be deceived, the word of Jesus is always our guide. That word stands even when the great foundations of the world crumble. It calms our fears in hostile world and amid all the catastrophes that occur in 2009.

2. As impressive and frightening as these events are they are not the end. Jesus tells us—"These are but the beginning of the birth pains. As a mother endures the pains of labor the baby is not born immediately, but it does signal that the birth process has begun. So it is with these signs and the end of the world.

B.1. It is the promise of God's word that keeps us in times of trouble. After all, when foundations are crumbling what can we really depend upon? The psalmist reminds us: "Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish." (Psalm 146:3-4) It is God's word that gives us a solid foundation and is the best answer for all of our problems.

Jesus told his disciples that they would have that assurance no matter what they faced. In the near future, the disciples would stand before the authorities. They would stand trial for their faith. There was no need for worry however. Jesus promised them: "And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." While this is a promise pertaining the disciples, still throughout history God has raised up those with extraordinary gifts to defend the case as in the case of Martin Luther. Certainly the Holy Spirit is always active through the word. As you know that word you can answer on any occasion.

2. Jesus concludes: "But the one who endures to the end will be saved." As you do that, you are standing on God's word. In the third article of the Apostles Creed we confess: "But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

This is the saving faith that Jesus wants proclaimed to the ends of the world. It also is the message that must be proclaimed to God's satisfaction before the end of the world comes. It is the faith that assures us of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus. In it you stand firm till the end because God has made it certain in sending his Son as your Savior. Amen.