

## Luke 21:5-36

**Verses 5-7: Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, “These things which you see—the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.”**

**So they asked Him, saying, “Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?”**

--(5) This scene is also picked up in **Mt. 24 + Mk. 13**.

--Some commentators believe Luke’s rendition happened earlier while in the temple and the other gospel writers pick up a further discussion outside of the temple, but it seems to make the most sense to put them together and just acknowledge the different information emphasized in each.

--The disciples are in awe of the temple. Herod the Great had enlarged and beautified Ezra’s old temple to such an extent that it was considered new. It was one of the wonders of the world, covered in white marble, set with massive plates of gold, and decorated with costly gifts from the wealthy.

--(6) Jesus is looking at things differently (**1 Sam. 16:7**). He sees and prophesies of the future destruction of the temple, which would literally come true with the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70AD.

--The literal fulfillment of Jesus’ words is important to note because it means the rest of what He says will also be fulfilled just as literally.

--(7) Wonderfully, the disciples believed Jesus! They understood the OT Scriptures of judgment and knew God had allowed Solomon’s temple to face judgment in the past.

--They then ask Jesus about the timing and signs of the destruction of the temple and the end of the age (**Mt. 24:3**), with the two ideas likely conflated in their minds.

--Jesus is going to have to differentiate for them the destruction of the temple, a long intermediate period, and His second coming.

**Verses 8-18: And He said: “Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and ‘The time has drawn near.’ Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.”**

**Then He said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to**

***contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls.***

--(8-9) Before Jesus explains what signs will come before the destruction of the temple and His second coming, He explains things that will happen that should not be considered signs.

Nowhere in these verses does He call these things "signs." Jesus is explaining that these things are a part of every age, not signs of the end of the age.

--He doesn't want disciples thinking that crazy world events, as well as governmental and social persecution, are unique signs of the end of the age. To varying degrees, those are challenges for all disciples in every age.

--Jesus' statement is clear: ***for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.***

--Jesus had been teaching His disciples that there would be an extended period of time between His first and second coming:

**\*Lk. 12:38: and if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch. . .**

**\*Lk. 17:22: the days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.**

**\*Lk. 19:12: A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and return.**

--Jesus warns them about false messiahs and wild world events, but says ***do not be deceived + do not be terrified*** by either. They are both a part of the process.

--It is important to see what Jesus is saying, because many commentators and pastors do the exact opposite and make every world war or event a sign! They do exactly what Jesus says not to do. Instead of the boy who cried: *Wolf!*; They become the pastor who cried: *Jesus' return!* And they make people just as desensitized.

--How many times have we seen this? \*WW1; WW2; Vietnam; our current wars or catastrophes, etc.\*

--Both Matthew (24:6+8) and Mark (13:7-8) say the same: ***but the end is not yet. . . beginnings*** (not the end!) ***of sorrows.***

--(10-11) Again, Jesus is saying that these are not immediate signs of the end of the temple or His second coming. These are events happening in every age of a fallen world!

--(Side note: Again, we see that Jesus takes it for granted that there will not be a universal peace before His second coming. Every age will be affected by sin and deception.)

--(12) ***But before all these things. . .*** continuing with the context of things that do not signify ***the end***, Jesus tells them what they will directly face as His disciples. They would face direct persecution ***for My name's sake. . .*** for loyalty to Jesus and His message. \*This clearly plays out all through the book of Acts.\*

--(13-15) Here, we have a wonderful promise of divine help. \*They had just seen this reality in Jesus' interactions with the religious leaders in the temple!\*

--***I will give you.*** . . . A promise spoken by God!

--(16-19) They would even be persecuted by the dearest of relationships. In the end, all men will turn against Christ and His followers. \*We walk a narrow road!\*

--***But not a hair of your head shall be lost.*** . . . is spoken in the context of: ***and they will put some of you to death.*** How does that work?

***\*John 11:25-26: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"\****

--What would it be like for them to have seen the resurrected Jesus, with all His hair in tact!

--***By your patience possess your souls.*** . . . Patience to the point of death, or through this sin-sick world to the return of our Lord. By pointing out their various adversities through the time of patience, Christ was giving them fortitude to know the world wasn't out of control.

--Also, notice that there is no health and wealth gospel here! Instead, we see the blood of the martyrs as the seed of the Church. \*Here in America, we should be grateful that we have it as good as it gets for Christians in this world.\*

***Verses 20-24: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."***

--(20) Now Jesus directly answers their question about when the temple would be destroyed. Here, He gives them a direct sign: ***When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.***

--The language gives us the sense of a process: *being surrounded by armies*. The siege of Jerusalem was a process.

--(Side note: In writing this as he does, Luke is making clear that this event has not happened as of yet. Many scholars place the date of his gospel between 60-65AD. Very near to the event!)

--(21-22) Jesus warns all who will listen to flee! Fleeing persecution or destruction is not an ungodly response. In fact, sometimes it is an act of faith. Faithful followers of God fleeing divine wrath and persecution was something repeated through OT, NT, and church history.

--Jesus says to flee because the sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple would be a prophetic type of divine vengeance (**Dan. 9:26; Lk. 11:50-51**).

--The disciples of Christ were not to expect a messiah or miraculous deliverance. They were to expect God's judgment.

--This is not the same as the **abomination of desolation** mentioned in Matthew and Mark. In this case, there was no desecration of the temple as it was burned, and there would be no chance to flee as the city was already surrounded by Roman armies.

--Historically, we know many Jews did flee, and there are even stories about miraculous deliverances of fleeing Jewish believers.

--**(23)** Again, we see Jesus' special care for pregnant and nursing mothers.

--**(24)** When Jerusalem was taken, it is estimated that nearly a million Jews were slaughtered and thousands more were sold into slavery.

--What are **the times of the Gentiles**? Well, it relates to the city of Jerusalem being **trampled by Gentiles**. Which describes the city being under Gentile control, and less than God would have it to be.

--I believe **the times of the Gentiles** will be over when the city of Jerusalem becomes all that God would have it to be. When will that happen? At the second coming of Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords!

--Jesus had warned them that He would **give the vineyard to others (Lk. 20:16)**. Israel still exists in the world, though in a secondary place. They will one day return in a primary role in the witness of God (144,000 witnesses) and the plan of God in the world (tribulation and millennial reign).

--Again, I think it is important to note that these prophecies were fulfilled literally. So too, will all the prophecies related to **the times of the Gentiles**.

--Even John Trapp in his New Testament commentary, who wrote during the 1800's, commented on this verse that the Jews would have to return and live in Jerusalem! If the disciples—specifically John, who wrote the book of Revelation—saw many of these things literally fulfilled in their lifetime, can we possibly imagine they would think the other OT and NT prophecies would be fulfilled any other way?

**Verses 25-28: "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."**

--(25-26) Having spoken about the signs before the desolation of the temple and Jerusalem, Jesus now answers their question about the signs before His coming and the end of the age.

--The signs Jesus mentions are general, not symbolic. There is a big difference. They will literally happen just as predicted in the OT: **Isa. 13:10; Ex. 32:7; Joel 2:10+31; 3:15**. . . and in the NT, specifically the book of Revelation.

--One specific detail is that of ***men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth***. . . The Greek word for ***failing*** (*apopsycho*) is used only here in the NT. It literally means *to breathe out life, to expire, or swoon away*.

--The things happening in the world will be so drastic that men will have a real sense that the world is ending and will literally be dying because of the fear and terror of it all. \*Can't we all feel that reading through the book of Revelation?!\*

--(27-28) At the worst and darkest moment in world history, when the wheat and tares are both full ripe, the Son of Man will come in great power and glory!

--This is not a fairy tale like Aslan reappearing with an army, or Gandalf arriving at Helm's Deep! The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be the greatest moment of ***redemption*** in the history of this world (**Dan. 7:13-14; Mk. 14:62**).

**Verses 29-33: Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."**

--(29-31) The parable here is repeated in **Mt. 24:32-35 + Mk. 13:28-31**.

--Here, the fig tree is not to be taken as Israel, as Jesus says it is true of ***all the trees***.

--The simple point is that just as buds on a tree signify the nearness of summer, so the signs He has pointed to signify the nearness of His kingdom.

--Does that refer to the desolation of Jerusalem or His second coming? I tend to think both—as He later refers to all His words (**33**).

--(32) This is probably the most debated verse in the book of Luke. The reason is that the term ***generation*** can be used in numerous senses.

1) Generation can be used as a description of a literal 40 to 70 year lifecycle: (**Ex. 1:6; Deut. 2:14; Mt. 11:16; Lk. 11:50-51**). If that is what Jesus means, then He is speaking about the generation listening that would live to see the destruction of Jerusalem.

2) Generation can be used to describe a race or national group: (**Ex. 17:16; Deut. 23:3; Ps. 12:7; Lk. 1:50; 1 Peter 2:9**). If that is what Jesus means, then He is saying the Jewish people will remain until the end of all He has talked about.

3) Generation can be used to describe the character of a people group: **(Mt. 12:39, 45; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:41; 16:8; Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:15)**. If that is what Jesus means, then He is speaking about the hard-hearted, Christ-rejecting character of those who refused Him as Messiah.

--I am not sure which it is, but since Jesus says ***till all these things take place***—I would lean toward an interpretation that fits with people all the way to the end, like the second or third explanation, and not the first interpretation of ***generation***.

--**(33)** This present heaven and earth ***will pass away!*** God is moving us toward a New Heaven and New Earth. This first version of creation was the perfect boot camp to get us ready for the real thing. \*As our bodies die, turn to dust, and are resurrected, so too this world will turn to ash and be resurrected!\*

--What won't happen is that none of Jesus' words will be lost or fail. Everything will come into proper relation to the thoughts of God as expressed in the Word of God.

***Verses 34-36: "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."***

--**(34)** Jesus is shepherding His disciples here, not just informing them about interesting future events. Belief in Jesus' prophetic revelation should affect our daily lives.

--Remember as well, this was said to Jesus' disciples!

--First, we need to take heed to ourselves! Are our hearts being weighed down with indulgent sins and worldly pursuits? No Christian should be found partying, drunk, or caught up in worldly living when Jesus returns.

--Think of how foolish and childish it will seem when the Lord begins to judge the wickedness of the world, and we are enjoying what He will bring to desolation! \*Imagine those Jews living it up in Jerusalem until the Romans came and burnt it all down. How vain and worthless!\*

--Second, disciples should not live like ensnared "earth dwellers." Are our lives different? Can we be seen as salt and light?

--Third, are we pursuing spiritual responses to the world we live in? Are we watchful of our own hearts and lives and prayerful of others? Do we remain so through the various seasons of life?

--Do we live in a way that is worthy of the kingdom of God?

--The idea of living in a manner worthy of God's kingdom is an often-repeated NT theme. See: **Lk. 20:35; Acts 5:41; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5, 11; Rev. 3:4.**