

The End is Coming

Luke 21:5-36

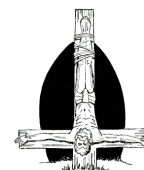


The End?

- ❑ A few days before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus entered Jerusalem (*Luke 19:28-44*). He was praised by many but opposed by others. As he taught in the temple area, many listened with great interest, but the religious leaders challenged his authority and attempted to trap him (*19:47-20:47*). However, they could not succeed in their efforts to discredit Jesus.
- ❑ As Jesus' disciples spent time around the temple, they were impressed with its beauty, and they talked about it. This provided Jesus an opportunity to talk about "the end." Read Luke 21:5-33.¹
 - 📖 "Teacher, they asked, 'when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?'" (*Luke 21:7*)²

Until the End

- ❑ Jesus does not immediately give them a direct answer, but helps prepare his disciples for the period of time prior to the end. He first warns them of false saviors or Messiahs, and he says "watch out that you are not deceived...do not follow them" (*21:8*).
 1. Under what conditions are people most likely to be led astray by false saviors?
- ❑ Jesus tells them that wars and revolutions (disturbances) *will* happen, but he says, "do not be frightened" (*21:9*). He lists international conflicts and wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences (widespread disease), and other fearful events (*21:10-11*).
 2. In the midst of wars, disturbances, and other fearful events, Jesus tells his disciples, "do not be frightened." (*21:9a*) Why should they not be frightened?³
- ❑ But before all of this, Jesus' disciples will face severe mistreatment because of their faith. They will be hated and mistreated by religious authorities, civil authorities, and even family members and "friends" (*21:12-17*).⁴
 3. Of course, this will mean much difficulty and suffering. However, what positive statements does Jesus make?⁵ (*21:13-15, 18-19*)



¹ This discourse is also recorded in Matthew 24:1-42 and Mark 13:1-37. There are various interpretations related to solving the tension between 1) the destruction of Jerusalem and 2) the end of the age, and the second coming of Christ. This handout does not address the various interpretations; however, if you have questions, ask Jay.

² Their question concerned the temple, but the fall of the temple was apparently linked with the end of the age. Matthew records, "when will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (24:3)

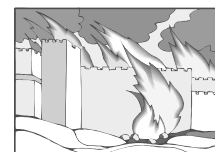
³ Jesus tells them, "These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away" (21:9b). We may not understand *why* they must happen, but they must. In any case, God is still in control. He will accomplish his good plan.

⁴ Acts records much of this mistreatment, but much is not recorded. While this refers specifically to the mistreatment of disciples prior to the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70), it applies to the entire period of the Church prior to Christ's return.

⁵ "This will result in your being witnesses to them" (21:13). This will provide opportunities to demonstrate the grace of God, and proclaim the good news. Mark adds, "And the gospel must first be preached to all nations" (13:10). Jesus says he will give them words and wisdom (21:14-15) by the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11). Jesus promises, "not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life" (21:18-19). Since some will be killed, Jesus must be speaking of their ultimate, spiritual safety. As Mark records, "he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (13:13).

The Fall of Jerusalem

- ❑ Jesus clearly says that Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed (21:20-24). Many people will be killed and others will be taken captive. It will be a time of great distress in the land. “For this is the time of punishment⁶ in fulfillment of all that has been written” (21:22). For they “did not recognize the time of God’s coming” in the person of Jesus Christ (19:44).
- ❑ This prophecy was fulfilled 40 years later. In response to the Jewish revolt against the Romans beginning in AD 66, the Roman general Titus forced his way into Jerusalem, and destroyed the temple and the city in AD 70.⁷



The Coming of Christ

- ❑ Jesus moves from the fall of Jerusalem to the end of the age (21:25-28).⁸ There will be signs in the heavens.⁹ “At that time, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky” (Matt.24:30a). “...they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27).¹⁰
- ❑ At Christ’s coming, many will “faint with terror” (v. 26), but believers are encouraged (v. 28).¹¹

Certainty of the End

- ❑ Jesus tells them a parable to emphasize the certainty of the end of the age (21:29-33). When the fig trees sprout leaves, they can be certain that summer is near. When they see these things¹² that Jesus has mentioned, they can be certain that the kingdom of God is near.¹³ Jesus says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (21:33).

4. As we consider our existence in this troubled world, and the fact that “heaven and earth will pass away,” how can Jesus’ words help us? How can they change our perspective on life?

What to Do

5. Read Luke 21:34-36. In these days, before the end comes, what must believers do?¹⁴

Reflection & Application

- Are you ready for Christ’s return? Do you need to receive him as Lord? As a believer, are you keeping things in proper perspective? Reflect on vv. 34-36, and stay ready for Christ’s return.

⁶ “time of punishment” (*hēmerai ekdikēseōs* – days of vengeance) – refers to God’s judgment.

⁷ “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles (non-Jews) until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (21:24b). This may refer to the period of Israel’s hardening “until the full number of Gentiles has come in” (Rom 11:25).

⁸ Interpretations vary, but reference to the second coming of Christ at the end of the age is the most obvious view.

⁹ “There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars (21:25; see Matthew 24:29). “Whether these events are to be understood as primarily literal [Exod. 10:21-23; Matt. 27:45] or primarily figurative [Isa. 13:10; 34:4; Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:10; Amos 8:9], it is clear that these will be ‘earth-shattering’ events...” (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 1874)

¹⁰ This language reflects Daniel 7:13-14, where “one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven... was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (NIV).

¹¹ “redemption” – in this context, complete deliverance and salvation; deliverance from the fallen world.

¹² “these things” (21:31) exclude the events in verses 25-28 (that is, Christ’s coming itself), but include Jerusalem’s fall and all the other kinds of trouble faced by believers during the period between Christ’s ascension and his return.

¹³ “near” does not specify the time, but “implies that nothing more in God’s plan of redemption must occur before the end can come” (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992], 363). “No one knows about that day or hour” (Matt 24:36). “this generation” (*hē genea hautē*, v. 32) has various interpretations, but the generation living when Jesus spoke is the most obvious, which makes sense if “all these things” in v. 32 is equal to “these things” in v. 31.

¹⁴ We must be careful, or we will fall into sin or let the worries of this world distract us from Christ. We must keep watching (that is, stay spiritually awake and ready). This requires prayer. By God’s grace, we must persevere and be faithful, so that we may be able to stand (unashamed) before Christ when he returns. He will strengthen us and guide us.