

Preparation with the teacher Luke 21v5-38

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 March 2018

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 0 0] Jesus' disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another.

Every one of them will be thrown down. Teacher, they asked, when will these things happen and what will be the sign that they are about to take place? He replied, watch out that you are not deceived, for many will come in my name claiming I am he and the time is near.

Do not follow them. When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.

Then he said to them, nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines, pestilences in various places and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to the synagogue and put you in prison and you will be brought before the kings and governors and all on account of my name.

[1 : 1 5] And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

You'll be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me, but not a hair of your head will perish.

Stand firm and you will win life. When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.

For this is the time of punishment and fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers.

They will be in great distress in the land and wrath against his people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

[2 : 3 1] There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.

People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time, they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

When these things begin to take place, stand up, lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. He told them this parable.

Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

Truly, I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

[3 : 33] Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life. That day will close on you suddenly like a trap, for it will come on all those who live in the face of the whole earth.

Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man. Each day, Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.

Well, let's pray together and ask for God's help as we look at this section together. Let's pray.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth.

Father, we pray that right now your word would be effective in our lives, that it would go forth and bring about fruit in our lives.

[5 : 23] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, Storm Ophelia, Storm Emma, the beast from the east.

What are we to make of all these extreme weather changes we've been having? Well, some will say it's all part of global warming, the effects of pollution.

Others will say they're signs that the Lord Jesus is going to return. You see, there's always been a fascination, particularly among Christians, about trying to predict the future, when the end will come.

What do you think about all that? Well, can we believe what people say when they talk about signs that are happening? How do we know that it's all true?

Well, Jesus has made the extraordinary claim that he knows what is going to happen. Look at verse 33. Jesus says, Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

[6 : 45] He's saying that his words surpass everything that you can see. My words rule over the past, over the present, and over the future.

So the one thing that we can trust is what Jesus says. But how do we know that what Jesus says is true?

Well, Jesus is now in Jerusalem. It's about four days before his execution. But before Jesus dies, he wants us to be clear about the future.

Chapter 21 that we've just read can be very confusing. And it's very easy to get bogged down in all the detail. But if we can keep the big picture in mind, I think it's very clear what Jesus is saying to us today.

There are two promised events. There's the promise of the temple destruction. Look at verse 20. When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.

[8 : 00] Then there's the promise of the coming of the Son of Man, verse 27. At that time, they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

So these are the two main events, the two headlines of chapter 21. But there are also these two events that are connected to make one main point.

The promised destruction of the temple assures us of the promised coming of Jesus, the Son of Man. One writer put it like this in connecting the two points, the two main events together.

He talked of it like this. A final but distant future event, that's the coming of Jesus, is prefigured in a near and realized event, talking about the destruction of the temple.

So a final and distant future event is prefigured in a near and realized event. So as Jesus is teaching here in chapter 21, as he's teaching, at the time, the temple is still standing.

[9 : 19] It's not yet destroyed. But now in 2018, as we look back and listen to what Jesus taught, well, the temple has now been destroyed.

One event has already been taken place, which points to another event, which is yet to take place. So that's kind of the big outline of chapter 21.

So let's look at it in more detail. First, the promised destruction of the temple. Let's read verse 5. Some of the disciples, so you've got to remember that the disciples of Jesus have made their way down from the north, from Galilee, down into Jerusalem.

They're not usually there, so it's all kind of new, a brand new experience for them. So some of his disciples were remarking about, wow, look at the temple. Look at it.

Isn't it big? How it's adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. It was the most magnificent building in the world at that time.

[10 : 29] One historian, Josephus, who wrote at the time, described it. He said, the gate opening into the temple was completely overlaid with gold, as was the whole wall around it.

Just picture it. It had above it golden vines which hung huge grape clusters as tall as a man. And it had golden doors, 50 cubits high, so that's 20 metres high, 16 cubits broad, that's 8 metres wide.

Before these hung a Babylonian tapestry of equal length with embroidery of blue and fine linen of scarlet also and purple, wrought with marvellous skill.

It was a magnificent building. Stones used to build it were 12 metres long and 4 metres high. The columns to support part of it would stretch 12 metres high and would take three men holding hands to reach all the way around a pillar.

It was a symbol of power, beauty and wealth. This temple could not be destroyed. So as the disciples surveyed this magnificent building, Jesus predicts something terrible, verse 6.

[11 : 52] As for what you see here, the time will come while not one stone will be left on the other, every one of them will be thrown down.

Teacher, they asked, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place? Well, yes, certain things will happen, says Jesus, and they will be a sign that the temple will be destroyed.

He tells His disciples what some of those signs are. He talks about Messiah pretenders in verse 8. He replied, watch out that you are not deceived, for many will come in My name claiming, I am He, I am the Messiah, and the time is near.

Acts 5, verse 36, actually records one of these kind of Messiah pretenders. It says this, in Acts 5, 36, some time ago, Thudus appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about 400 men rallied to Him.

He was claiming to be a special person, sent from God. These were one of the signs. Jesus says, don't follow them. He also said, there will be the sign of cosmic disorder, verse 10.

[13 : 16] Then He said to them, nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines, and pestilences in various places, and fearful events, and great signs from heaven.

Again, another historian, Tacitus, records what this particular time was like. He said, it was a period rich in disasters, terrible in battles.

Four emperors fell by the sword. There were three civil wars, more foreign wars, and often at the same time. It was a brutal time of history. Nations against nation, kingdom against kingdom.

And Acts 11, verse 28, tells us there was a great famine that spread over the whole Roman world. These were the signs that Jesus talked about would happen before the temple's destruction.

And He said, there will be intentional persecution, verse 12. But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought, you will be brought before kings and governors, and all account of my name.

[14 : 34] Verse 16, you will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me.

Now much of this persecution that Jesus talked about happened under the fearsome Nero. He wanted to rebuild Rome, he burnt the city and blamed the Christians.

Again, Tacitus, the historian, tells us that Christians were a class of persons who were loathed, hated by the human race.

Read through the book of Acts and you will see the persecution was true. Stephen, stoned to death. Lots of persecution happening. And Jesus is saying, these are all signs, these are things that are going to happen to tell you that the temple will be destroyed.

And it was. Verse 20, when you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.

[15 : 47] In AD 70, about 37 years after Jesus had spoken these very words, the temple was destroyed.

You can go and see the evidence of it today. The Roman authorities had had enough of Jewish rebellion and revolution and under the command of Titus, the Romans marched and surrounded the city.

You couldn't get into the city, you couldn't get out of the city. It was classic warfare tactic, waiting until all the resources in the side of the city had been used up when they had no food, no water, then you attacked.

And it was brutal and violent. You can look it up in history. A terrible event. Verse 24, they will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations.

Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. The temple was destroyed.

[16 : 51] just as Jesus had said. It's an undisputed historical event. And those who had listened to Jesus would not have been surprised when it happened.

But this just wasn't about the might of the Romans. This was God's judgment on the people. Verse 22. For Jesus says, this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.

How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers. There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.

Now, we mustn't think that God is some vindictive tyrant who takes delight in such terrible violence for the Romans coming in on Jerusalem. Remember earlier what Jesus said as he approached Jerusalem, as he was on the outskirts of the city and looked over the city and saw the temple in all its grandeur.

Have a look back at chapter 19 verse 41. Acts 9, Luke 19 verse 41.

[18 : 17] As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it. Here is a man full of compassion, desperate for the people to turn to him, to run to him.

And Jesus said, if you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now is hidden from your eyes.

The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground and the children within your walls.

They will not leave one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you. Hard words, but true words from Jesus, longing that the people would turn to him and accept him as the Messiah, as God's saving king.

But because they had refused to listen to him and accept him as their savior, a terrible judgment fell.

[19 : 30] but those who had listened to Jesus' words would not have been surprised. So first we have the promised destruction of the temple.

Second, the promised coming of the Son of Man. Remember, there's two big events in chapter 21. The first event we've just looked up, the temple destruction, but it's a sign of the second event to come, the coming of Jesus.

You see, Jesus is making it very clear to those he's speaking to. Look back at verse 9. He says to them, when you hear of wars and uprisings, don't be frightened.

These things must happen first. But what are these things? What are these things Jesus is talking about? Well, he's just been talking about the temple being destroyed in verse 6.

So, end of verse 9, these things, the temple being destroyed, must happen first, but the end will not come right away.

[20 : 45] So, when you see the temple being destroyed, it's not the end of the world. It's just a sign that the Son of Man is coming. Verse 29, he told them this parable.

Look, the fig tree and all the trees, when they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that the summer is near. The leaves in spring, well, they're a sign that summer is just round the corner.

Verse 31, even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Again, these things, when you see the temple being destroyed, you'll know that the end is near.

As we've said in AD 70, the temple was destroyed, just as Jesus said. And as we now look back in time to that true and undisputed historical event, so we are now to look forward with absolute certainty that Jesus, the Son of Man, is coming.

there is a sign and that sign has taken place. The Son of Man is coming. Now, the Son of Man is a title which comes from Daniel chapter 7, which Jesus, his favourite title for himself as he speaks about himself being the Son of Man.

[22 : 16] Here's a quote from Daniel 7 where it comes from. Daniel has a vision and he says, there before me was one like the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.

He approached the Ancient of Days, that's God the Almighty. He was led into his presence and was given authority and glory and sovereign power and all the nations and the peoples of every language worshipped him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Now the coming of the Son of Man is going to be an awesome event as Daniel had that in his vision of one coming with great power and great authority coming to this earth.

So look at verse 25 of Luke 21. There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the rousing and tossing of the sea.

Now this is apocalyptic language. I don't think we're to get concerned about blood moons and the alignment of stars or the beast from the east.

[23 : 40] Rather Luke is saying to us, look when the Son of Man comes, it is going to be unmistakable. Verse 26.

People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

When the Lord Jesus comes again, the world and all its people will fall silent. People will bow in fear, acknowledging that yes, Jesus Christ is God's King.

Justice will be done. Evil will be judged. There will be no hiding. There will be no escape. And each one of us will have to stand and give an account before the one with absolute power and supreme authority.

God's will will be no will be no will will be no will. But we don't need to fear. For the Christian, this is something to welcome and be joyful about as we think of the Lord's return.

[25 : 01] Verse 28, will stand up, lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near.

Every day that passes is a day closer to the Lord's return. Every war that rages, every natural disaster that falls, every opposition and persecution that is endured, is a sign that our redemption is getting close.

That one day our great and glorious King is going to fill the earth with his glory, his might and his power will end all suffering and all things will be made new.

And God is going to dwell with his people and we will reign with him. You see, for the Christian, this is not something to fear, the great and awesome Son of Man coming with all power and all authority.

This is something to welcome and to rejoice about. Lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near.

[26 : 21] Yes, one day the Lord Jesus will return. the sign, well, the temple has been destroyed, just as Jesus said.

And the Son of Man is coming, just as Jesus said. So third, we must be prepared to stand before the Son of Man.

Just as sure as the temple was destroyed, so the Son of Man will come. And the question is, are we prepared to meet him? Look at the end of verse 36.

Jesus is saying all of this, end of verse 36, that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man. We will face him.

Are we ready to? Well, two things by way of preparation. First, be careful.

[27 : 26] Look at verse 34. Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, that's fueling your life with drink, drunkenness and the anxieties of life.

It's funny, why is Luke talking about people drinking and getting drunk? drunk? Why do people drink and get drunk so much in this country anyway?

Why is it that people live for the weekend so that they can go out with their mates and get drunk or sit at home alone with a bottle of wine?

Why is it that there are so many teenagers? Near where we live, there's a little wood, nearly every weekend you could have up to 40 teenagers drinking away, getting absolutely wiped out.

Why? Why is it in our culture? Why do we do that? Well, because we have nothing to live for. Getting drunk is simply a way of trying to numb the worries of this life because there is nothing beyond this life.

[28 : 45] For some it's to dull the pain of today in all the struggles that people may face and at the same time to somehow create a happiness for the moment.

Isn't that why people drink? Dull the pain of today? To get rid of the worries and to create a false kind of happiness for the moment? So Jesus says, be careful.

Be careful, verse 34. because that day will close on you suddenly like a trap, for it will come on all those who live in the face of the whole earth.

Be careful that we don't get caught up with the world who only live for the now, who are only living for today, because the future, well, they've got nothing to look forward to.

When you die, you die, and that's it. There's nothing to come. Be careful, we don't get caught up into that kind of thinking. Mike McKinley has a little book on Luke's Gospel, recommend you to read it.

[29 : 56] He says this, no one ever looked at pornography, flirted with someone who was not their spouse, or ran up credit card debts on things they can't afford, with their heart set expectantly, on the reality that Jesus would return.

You see, if we're not focused on the Lord Jesus' return, we're focused on the here and now, trying to fill our life with all kinds of things to dull the pain and create a happiness because we've got nothing to look forward to.

Be careful that we don't get sucked into thinking this life is all that we have. Set your hearts on Jesus, who gives us life in all its fullness.

Look back at verse 19. Stand firm and you will win life. True life is found in him. The Son of Man is coming.

Be prepared, be careful. careful. The second thing by way of preparation is watch out. Verse 36.

[31 : 14] Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

We're to be on the lookout. Watch out. Wait patiently for the Lord's return. And the way to keep watch, do you see it there beginning of verse 36?

Watch out and pray. Pray. Pray. You see, the signs that Jesus spoke of earlier are signs or things that still happen today.

There are false messiahs, those who try to lead us away from Christ, come up with notions telling us that, oh, the time is near, oh, the beast from the east, Jesus is coming next week.

Wars and threats of wars, famines and earthquakes and natural disasters, opposition and persecution. We can see and experience all these things in the world today and the danger is they can cause us to think, well, where is God?

[32 : 21] All this is happening. Where is he? Doesn't God care with all the trouble that's going on in the world? All these wars in Syria? All the persecutions that are happening in Asia?

What's God doing? And the temptation for you and me is to give up this promise of Jesus coming. I mean, 2,000 years have passed. Don't believe it anymore.

We might as well go and get drunk with everybody else. No, says Jesus, watch out. Be patient. Keep looking.

And pray, verse 36, so that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen. That doesn't mean we'll escape the terrible things in this life and that we'll have a suffering-free life.

It means we will escape the coming judgment of God. We continue to look to the Lord Jesus, trusting in him.

[33 : 23] That's why Jesus came to give us life, to bring salvation. And so the encouragement for us is to pray. Be a people of prayer.

Ask God in the midst of this chaotic world and life to keep us focused on the promise coming of the Lord Jesus. Ask God that you will not fall into temptation, but that we will be faithful and obedient until he comes.

Ask God that we would be faithful in our witness. Do you see what it says in verse 15? He says, I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

Pray that as we wait for the Lord Jesus, we will be faithful. And that we will maintain our witness, that we will not fall. Be careful.

Watch out so that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man. I'm going to pray a prayer.

[34 : 40] It's a prayer that Saint Patrick, or maybe we just call him Patrick, he was a saint in the right sense. But here's a prayer that Patrick prayed. let's read, let me pray this as we close together.

I now entrust my soul to God, who is most faithful, and for whom I am an ambassador in my humble station, for God has no favourites.

I ask God therefore for perseverance, to grant that I remain a faithful witness to him, for his own sake until my passing from this life.

For on that day we will undoubtedly rise in the brightness of the sun, that is in the glory of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, as sons of the living God, joint heirs with Christ and made in his image.

From him and through him and for him we will reign. we will remain forever as Christ remains forever, who reigns with God the Father Almighty and the Holy Spirit, before time began, and now for all eternity.

[36 : 07] Amen. Well, we're going to sing together. It's a great hymn, an old hymn.

Amen.