

# JESUS ON THE FUTURE

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[0:00] Father, you know the things which preoccupy us. You know that even now, Father, even a holy place, even though Jesus is in our midst, even though we're talking to you, even though the Holy Spirit is present, Father, you know how easy it is for us to be preoccupied with so many things.

Maybe it's a pain. Maybe it's an appointment. Maybe it's a word that somebody said to us beforehand. Maybe it's a dream. Maybe it's a fantasy, an idol. Father, you know how easy it is for us to be preoccupied and gripped by many things.

Father, we ask that in your kindness and in your mercy, your Holy Spirit would fall with fresh power upon us this morning, that you would make us disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel who live for your glory.

And, Father, that you would help our hearts to be gripped with the words of Jesus and so that we might live our lives by them. Father, this we ask, and we ask it in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So, I had a small, odd type of experience this morning. Not that odd, but between the two services, I go have a coffee at a coffee shop nearby.

[1:16] And on the way back, I'm praying about my talk. And, you know, there's always things about your talk that you... I always have things about my talk I'm not sure about. Anyway, I was praying about it, and it was as if God told me that I had to change my introduction, the one that I'd been working on all week.

And that's what I'm about to do, because I really had this sense that God told me that I was supposed to do it. Afterwards, coffee, you can ask me what my original introduction was going to be. And that's this.

If I was to be able to tell university students and professors and people who work in certain types of professions, especially things like social work and in politics, if I was to tell you that there were...

If I was to say that there were... If I had a chance, I would say that there's two or three passages in the Bible in particular that everybody in university or in social work or in politics should meditate upon deeply, maybe even weekly, and take deeply to heart.

And there'd be two or three or four texts like that that I would say that are absolutely essential in our day and age to develop a Christian mind. And the text in Luke, which I just read... I didn't write it.

[2:30] I read a few minutes ago. That would be one of those texts that I would say that that just about every academic, every university student, every professor, social work, politician, a few other professions as well, economists, that you need to, we need to deeply meditate upon this on a regular basis if we want to be able to begin to think Christianly.

So let's look. That's a pretty big claim that a text like this Luke text is so fundamental to developing a Christian mind. It's a pretty big claim.

So let's look at it and we'll see maybe why I would make such a big claim about the text. So it was Luke chapter 21 and we're back after a couple of weeks. We'll have a few weeks, you know, over the next week where we, a few weeks where we don't look at Luke, the gospel of Luke, but we're moving towards finishing the gospel of Luke.

And today we're at Luke chapter 21 and we'll begin at verse five again. And here's how the text goes. And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, and just sort of pause there, ancient historians, both Roman and Jewish, commented that even though the temple wasn't one of the seven wonders of the world, many of them said that it was more glorious than the seven wonders of the world, that it was a spectacular piece of architecture.

It was begun, a rebuilding, rejuvenation of the temple was begun about 20 years before the birth of Jesus. And in fact, the temple was to outlive Herod, in a sense, the building project outlived Herod. [ 4 : 14 ] And even while they were talking about this, the temple was continually being added upon and made more beautiful. The work would continue until the early 60s, about another 30 years after this incident.

So it was known in antiquity as a spectacularly beautiful building. And then verse 6. So they say this to Jesus because they're proud of it.

It's Jewish people. They're proud of its beauty. They're proud of everything that it symbolizes about religion and God's presence with them. And Jesus responds in a very surprising way. It would have been, it'd be hard for us just to imagine how deeply shocking it would be to them.

But Jesus says in verse 6, as for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

Now just sort of pause there before we keep reading. There's a couple of things in it. The first thing is that when Jesus says, it translated quite well in English, and for these things that you see, he's saying that there's going to be several things connected to the destruction of Jerusalem.

[ 5 : 26 ] And we'll see that when the people respond, they understand that he's talking not just narrowly about the destruction of the temple, but that Jesus has other things in mind as well. And in fact, for Jewish people at the time, they would have seen the destruction of the temple as not just being a catastrophe, but it would have been a catastrophe for the people.

It would have been a sign of God's judgment upon the people. And so they're very, very curious that Jesus would say something like this is about to happen. And the other thing which is about this text is I would be one of those people that would be described by outsiders as taking the Bible literally.

And there's a way to understand that which is true. I take the Bible seriously. I believe that even though this was originally an historical document written about 30 years, 34 years, 35 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus as a result of historical research, I would believe that it is also God's word written, that every word that God wanted to have written down there was written down. But we have to understand that people, we just always talk in metaphors and analogies. It's just the way that human beings talk. Human beings have always talked with metaphors and analogies.

And so when it says here that there will not be one stone upon another that will not be thrown down, Jesus is using a metaphor of total and complete destruction.

[ 6 : 49 ] So it's not the case that if you went back in time and you heard Jesus say this and then in the year 70 when the temple was destroyed you put a stone on top of another stone and said, ha ha ha, Jesus was wrong.

It wouldn't work like that. It doesn't literally mean that after the destruction there isn't one stone upon another. It's a metaphor. It's a way of talking about complete and total destruction, unusability of the temple.

And that's what Jesus says. Look at that verse 6 again. It's for these things that you see. Look at the temple, all of these things. Okay? The days will come, plural, so there's going to be a variety of things that happen, when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

So the people around Jesus are desperately interested in this. And so they say in verse 7, they're going to ask Jesus, two questions. And one of the things you're going to notice is that Jesus, by the time we get to verse 38, Jesus doesn't answer one of the questions.

He answers just one of the two questions and he also answers a question they don't ask, but they should have asked. And here's what they say, verse 7, and they asked him, teacher, when will these things be and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?

[ 8 : 06 ] So in other words, when's it going to happen? What are the signs that it's about to happen? Jesus never answers the when question. He's going to talk about the signs, but before that, he takes sort of a sideways look at the whole question.

And that begins in verse 8. It's actually going to continue right up to verse 19, but we'll just read 8 and 9 and then pause. Jesus said, see that you are not led astray.

Remember that? Jesus doesn't want his people to be led astray. He doesn't want any human being to be led astray. For many will come in my name saying, I am he, and the time is at hand.

In other words, many people will come claiming to be the Messiah, or they will come claiming to know how history is moving, and they will claim to know exactly what the direction of history and the

specific important moment that we are now in in terms of history's direction.

And Jesus says, do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.

[ 9 : 18 ] Now, one of the things I've done today, I'm going to describe the points, but I've turned all of the points into prayers. You see, one of the things, the vision for our church is it will be a prayerful, Bible-teaching church, amongst other things.

And so, one of the things I want to try to do is to help you to learn how to pray, help myself to learn how to pray, to learn to pray the Bible. I mean, how can you go wrong as a follower of Jesus if you learn to pray in response to what Jesus says?

So, here's the first thing. If you could put it up, Andrew. Dear God, please grow in me a complete and total rejection of every Messianic and Utopian movement and vision.

There you go. Dear God, please grow in me a complete and total rejection of every Messianic and Utopian movement and vision.

By the way, this doesn't mean that you should reject Messianic Jews. Some Jewish people who become Christians refer to themselves as Messianic Jews because they believe the Messiah has come.

[ 10 : 28 ] I'm not referring to this. Here's the thing. This is one of the reasons, by the way, why I said that every university student and professor and those in politics, they need to meditate upon this text.

What we're going to see is that from verses 8 to 19, Jesus gives a whole series of non-signs. Okay? In other words, the world thinks that these things are very important and the Bible's not going to downplay it.

I'm going to get back to that. The Bible's not dismissing these as being unimportant things. What Jesus is going to say, these are non-signs. This is normal life. That's what Jesus is saying.

This is normal life. This isn't a sign of the end. And the reason that those of us who've gone far in education need to study or are involved in politics is that, in fact, it's hard for modern Canadians to think without thinking in terms of the categories of messianic and utopian visions and movements. And in fact, a significant part of what goes on in academia is helping us to become accommodated to different visions of how history is moving, of how morality is progressing, of what is right and wrong in terms of utopian or messianic visions or understandings of where history is going to some type of utopia.

[ 12 : 04 ] And it's so deeply embedded in how we talk and how we analyze things. And often, university education, I mean, it does other things as well. I mean, it teaches you how to do statistics and, you know, there's obviously, it does more than this.

But it's deeply interwoven into the categories of modern thought, increasingly into the categories of law, deeply interwoven in politics, sociology, economics, literary theory, religious studies.

And what Jesus is going to say is that every single one of these utopias and visions is wrong. Every one without exception, none of them will take place.

Every one will lead you astray. Every one. There will not come a time when poverty is eradicated. Gosh, aren't you glad you came to church this morning?

Haven't I just lifted up your spirits? There will never be a time that poverty is eradicated. There is never going to be a time when there will not be violence. There will never be a time when there will not be war.

[ 13 : 11 ] There will never be a time when there is universal prosperity. Star Trek is wrong. Yes, I'm sorry. I've really ruined some people's weeks.

But Star Trek is wrong. There will not be this time of universal peace on the earth where mankind and womankind go boldly to explore places that have never come before.

It's just not going to happen. That's the claim that Jesus makes. By the way, for 2,000 years since this, there have been countless secular and religious versions of utopian and messianic visions and they've all been wrong.

2,000 years of Jesus being correct. And yet today, and I'm not picking on the left, it happens to be that right now, other than Star Trek, which is sort of a right wing, well, sort of soft left, therapeutic version of this.

You know, but today, we tend to think primarily of progressive in what would be called left-wing or liberal categories, but that's just an historical accident. In fact, it's only a historical accident in certain

forms.

[14:24] There's a version of Islam, which is inherently messianic and utopian, and that's what drives the terrorists, and to some extent, much Muslim thought. There's Hindu versions of it, but we're far more familiar with it in terms of different views around the left and in terms of gender and sexuality.

But in the past, there's been right-wing versions of this as well, and even Christianized versions using Christian language. And Jesus is saying here, I'm going to describe normal life.

And in normal life, as we're going to see in a moment, there's going to be earthquakes, there's going to be famines, there's going to be pestilences, there's going to be social unrest, there's going to be social chaos, there's going to be war, there's going to be false messiahs, there's going to be religious misleaders, there's going to be persecution, there's going to be oppression, this is normal life.

I know I've really encouraged you, but we'll get to some hope and encouragement in the midst of it. And so the first thing that we can pray, in fact, you know, maybe if I lose you and you fall asleep for the rest of the sermon, there's this point, maybe I'll wake you up again later on or something like that or drag you off of your Facebook updates, but this is a really important prayer for us to pray, especially if you actually don't think it's true.

And the more you don't think it's true of the economics or sociology or English literature that you're taking, then you have to pray this the most. Because it means we're not even aware of how much Messianic and Utopian visions are influencing the categories of our thought.

[16:02] So as we go on through these next verses, which will go on far quicker, the first point is, Dear God, please grow in me a complete and total rejection of every Messianic and Utopian movement and vision.

Let's keep looking. Some of you are going to say, George, isn't this depressing? Like, George, you've been really, really, really, really, really bleak.

Like, George, if this is the case, why don't Christians just all go build bomb shelters in northern Ontario or North Dakota or Wyoming or Idaho and stockpile canned goods and bottled waters and just sort of wait for the end to come.

Well, actually, I think historically when Christians take the words of Luke 21 the most seriously, it never leads us to be in bomb shelters.

In fact, Jesus is going to tell us in a few verses that that's the exact opposite thing of what we should do. And in fact, it's actually really important for us doing concrete things to help injustice and help the poor.

[17:14] Because, you see, if we actually believe wrong things that don't work, then it's not going to help us do any type of earthly good. It will only lead us to do earthly harm.

Let's just continue to see how Jesus sort of purges our minds. Verse 10, Then Jesus said to them, Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and pestilences, and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all this, they will lay their hands on you, he's talking to Christians, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake.

I mean, one of the people who's listening to this is, some of the people who are listening to this, that's exactly what's going to happen. That's going to happen to them within a few years of this, even though they're not aware of it.

This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Here's the first little bit of a turn in terms of bearing some type of hope. That, this sounds really depressing, especially when it talks about persecution, and Jesus wants us to understand that when persecution happens to us, it's not that we have to feel really sorry for ourselves.

[18:34] I mean, it's fine to come to God with our struggles with the fact that nobody likes to be persecuted, nobody likes to be slandered, nobody likes to have their name dragged through the mud, nobody likes to be misunderstood, nobody likes to be beaten up or have bad financial things happen to them, and it's fine for us to come to God in prayer, pouring out our heart about this, but at the end of the day, for some reason in the mystery of God, we are to understand that we, it's not that we've got to do this, that we get to do it, we get to bear witness to Jesus.

we get to bear witness to Jesus. I'm going to talk about this, I haven't talked about this in a long time, but some of you might or might not know that we used to own a church building, and we used to be part of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, and just over eight years ago, we, after a long period of trying to deal with the denomination, we realized the time had come when in faithfulness to Jesus and in trust and belief in the Bible that we could no longer be part of the denomination, and there was all sorts of slanderous things said about us in the press, and we ended up taking a stand, and we left the denomination, we ended up, the diocese sued us for something that would have eventually cost seven figures, and as part of a settlement out of court, we walked away from the building.

I'm just mentioning this because, what was one of the things that happened as a result of this? I mean, and I'm not, this isn't a, one of the things that happened to this, I got to be on coast-to-coast CBC morning radio.

I got to be on CTV news across the country, bearing witness to Jesus, bearing witness to why we took the stand that we did. I got to spend time with reporters. I got to be, talk to the fellow who's now the, the mayor of Toronto, about how the Bible works to change lives.

And I, that wouldn't have happened if we hadn't been pursued in the courts. Just would not have happened. No, nobody's calling me up today.

[ 20 : 45 ] By the way, I am not at all missing the feeling of dread that comes when you see that it's a reporter on your cell phone and you're going to have to talk to them. I don't say, oh God, please bring that back to me.

I'm not, but you know, God opened doors up through that that would not have happened otherwise and might never happen again to me, but I don't know. I don't know the future. I don't know what will happen. But here's the thing, that what we have to say to ourselves when these things happen to us, we can in private say, God, why me?

But God is giving us an opportunity and that's what Jesus is saying. It's the beginning of the hope which comes in the text, the peeking out to keep us going. So verse 13 again, this will be your opportunity to bear witness.

Settle it, therefore, in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer. for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand and contradict. Just sort of pause there for a second.

The original Greek is hard to translate here in a simple way. The language about meditating beforehand, another way to put it, it would have been long and wouldn't fit well in English, but basically the image is that you spend all of your time rehearsing a speech as if you're in a play.

[ 22 : 04 ] And what Jesus is saying is, okay, don't spend all your time back in a practice room rehearsing what you're going to say. Go out and live. Go out and bear witness.

And as we're going to see in a moment, go out and help the poor and go out and try to deal with injustice and go out and share the gospel and go out and do all these things. Don't spend all your time rehearsing what you're going to say like you're in a play.

Okay? Go out. Go out. Get on your knees, then stand up and get off your duff and go out and do things. And that's what Jesus is saying.

And also notice here a very, very subtle way that Jesus is making a claim to be God and he's claiming to rise from the dead. Look at verse 15 again. For I, I will give you a mouth and wisdom. I will give you these words. This is dynamite. This is dynamite. Part of the flow of the book is that Jesus is saying this right from Luke chapter 9 on to here.

[ 23 : 10 ] Jesus is saying, I'm going to Jerusalem to die. I'm going to Jerusalem to die. I'm going to Jerusalem to die. Jesus is now in Jerusalem. And when we next look at the next chapter, the next chapter is about the finalizing of the plot to put Jesus to death.

It's about the last supper and about, in other words, like 48 hours after Jesus says this, he's going to be dying on a cross. And he's pointing to the fact that he's going to rise, which he's also been telling people since Luke chapter 9.

I'm going to rise from the dead. And he gives himself the type of power that only God can give. What is Jesus saying? If George had any degree of ability to speak to the fellow who is now the mayor of Toronto, it's not because George is clever, but because Jesus gave me the words.

That is a profound claim that Jesus is making, that he will conquer sin and death and all hostile spiritual powers as he dies and rises, and that he is God.

We'll continue on. Verse 16, you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and sisters and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake.

[ 24 : 23 ] Who would want to become a Christian, eh? But not a hair of your head will perish. Once again, this is a symbol. It's not literal. It's not that if all of a sudden you came up to me and said, cut some of my hair, he said, aha, Jesus is wrong.

No. It doesn't contradict it. Jesus is saying, God, I care for you. You become my disciple. You trust me with your life.

You let me into your life. I let you into my life and I care for you. I care for even the tiniest details.

And Jeremiah has had us singing this song for the last, I don't know, four or five months.

It has a spectacular line and a deeply biblical line. In fact, I meant to ask him to sing it and I forgot to do it. Earth has no sorrow that heaven can't heal.

Or won't heal, can't heal? I think it's can't heal. Earth has no sorrow that heaven can't heal. That's what Jesus is saying. Earth has no sorrow that heaven can't heal.

[ 25 : 25 ] And even to the hairs of your head, you matter to me. Verse 19, by your endurance, you will gain your lives. It's a very, very, very powerful thing.

Now, now, Jesus is going to say something which has created, has killed a lot of trees.

If you go and try to read some academic commentaries on Luke, if you go read some journal articles on Luke, you'll see that there's been lots of pages and books written to what about Jesus is about to say.

Because what Jesus is about to do is to predict something that took place 33 years after his death.

And, in fact, one of the reasons that many people will say that the Gospel of Luke was written in the late 70s or the early 80s is because the commentators say we all know that no one knows the future.

And, because we know that no one knows the future, therefore, in this text of Scripture, when Jesus describes the destruction of Jerusalem, we know that he can't have done that.

[ 26 : 44 ] So, therefore, it was added by Christians afterwards. Now, I'm not going to try to, there's a very, very significant piece of evidence as to why this is a false claim.

In fact, the words of Jesus have a very peculiar and powerful historical proof that he said them before and that it was known and that they took it to heart.

And, well, let's read it and then I'll tell you what happened. Verse 20, but when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains and let those who are inside the city depart and let not those who are out in the country enter it for these are days of vengeance to fulfill all that is written.

Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days for there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath. God's wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles or the pagans are fulfilled.

[ 28 : 01 ] In the year 66 approximately 33 years after this was written the Jewish revolt against Rome began and Rome sent a general to deal with it and the general had a partial surrounding of Jerusalem and actually entered Jerusalem but the Jewish forces were able to drive him out of the city and when he left the city they were able to successfully ambush him and basically destroy his army.

It was profoundly shocking to Rome at the success and the power of the Jewish armed resistance against Roman imperial power.

So they sent one of their most competent generals Vespasian to go and to deal with these troublesome Jews and so Vespasian organized a variety of armies, Roman legions and first he quelled the uprising in Galilee and a few other areas and then after he quelled the uprising with great success, he was a very competent general, he gathered the legions and surrounded Jerusalem and it looked as if Jerusalem's doom was near.

But then the emperor Nero committed suicide in Rome thousands of miles away. committed suicide and then thus began what historians now refer to as the year of the four emperors because a massive power struggle emerged in Rome.

In the course of approximately 12 months four different people became the emperor of the Roman Empire and in the midst of all of that turmoil as Vespasian has surrounded Jerusalem with armies to destroy it.

[ 29 : 54 ] He is called back from Jerusalem to Rome to deal with it and he goes and he is successfully able to deal with the political turmoil and he becomes the emperor, Vespasian.

And he sends, after he has cemented power in Rome in the year 69, he sends a message to his son who is now the general to return to the siege and the destruction of Jerusalem.

And in the year 70, in August, Jerusalem falls. And as is reported by Josephus, approximately one million Jewish people die in that Jewish revolt and a hundred thousand of them are carried away as slaves into captivity.

And here's the thing about this. Historians record that when Vespasian left and the siege of Jerusalem was temporarily lifted, the Christian church left.

Christians did not die in the sack and destruction of Jerusalem. They relocated far away. Historical record.

[ 31 : 14 ] Don't you think it is reasonable to say that they remembered the words of Jesus, but when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it. Here's the thing, folks, and I've turned it into a prayer.

Dear God, please help me to remember that the words of Jesus have come true in the past, and please grow in me a trusting knowledge that his words are true today and every day until the end. It's a prayer that many of us need to pray, isn't it? Dear God, please help me to remember that the words of Jesus have come true in the past, and please grow in me a trusting knowledge that his words are true today and every day until the end.

By the way, if you don't have time to write these down, the notes for the sermon and the audio of the sermon go on the webpage, hopefully on Monday or soon after that, if these are helpful to you in terms of forming your prayer.

[ 32 : 26 ] But some of you might be saying, George, that's all very, very moving, but you skipped over the judgment part. Like, George, you skipped over. Surely you have to talk about this.

George, surely, okay, so Jesus, you know, he says this, he's right, and you know, you also say that he predicts his death upon the cross and his resurrection, and you know, last week you talked about the historical evidence for the reality of the resurrection and the meaning of the resurrection, but George, George, George, George, look at verse 20 again, but when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies and know that its desolation has come near, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains and let those who are inside the city depart and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, also could be translated as judgment to fulfill all that is written, and then, you know, alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days, for there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath, and it's the wrath of God against this people.

George, how can you, how, George, how can I take this seriously? You know, one of the dangers of messianic and utopian movements is that they always leave lots of people dead.

Messianic movement in Cambodia, Pol Pot, a third of the population, Soviet forced famines in Ukraine, Maosy Tong's Great Revolution.

Even today, I'm going to be a bad boy, but, you know, as our society becomes more post-Christian, and whatever that's going to be like, it's no, people probably don't even think of it as post-Christian now because it's post- post-Christian, and now we want to give doctors the power to kill the weak, and we're already killing the babies in the womb, and when you have utopian movements and visions, people die, and even when we talk about climate change, I'm not going to enter into whether or not I, a few weeks ago, I talked about this as an example, and I didn't say that it was a fact, and I got a very nice email rebuking me for not saying that it was a fact.

[ 34 : 35 ] You know, I think if it's science, it's always open for debate, but, you know, it's either some type of historical inevitability that leads people to die, or because the end justifies the means, it means that some people have to die, and on one hand, it can just sound as if we're not aware of the cruelties often of the messianic movements and utopias that we believe this moment, it's easier for us to see the cruelties of the ones that are in the past, although even then, now, as you know, with the controversy around the memorial to the victims of communism, there are still people who

don't want to acknowledge that they backed a completely evil social system with all of their power for decades, and they don't want to acknowledge that, but it's easy if you go far enough back that you can see it in the past, you can't see it in the present, but people die, and there's no mercy, and here's the thing for us as we listen to this text, as we listen to this text, it's a very, very un-Canadian idea, I'm not going to be able to sell it to you, all I'm going to be able to say is this, that the Bible says that we are rebels against

God, and that every single human being will be judged, that that is completely and utterly inevitable, but this is not just another messianic thing where it's just going to be, it sucks to be you, and you're all going to die, and you're just all under the judgment of God, that as Jesus is saying this, he is saying this, the day before he does the, introduces the Lord's Supper, and that night he'll be betrayed, and the next day he will hang upon the cross, and the great promise of the scriptures is that God gives every human being a choice, that's why there are evangelists, this is why there are missionaries who go to even unreached peoples, and the choice that God gives to us is the judgment of God must surely fall, and the choice before us is whether it falls on me, or whether it falls on Jesus in my stead, and in my place, that is the human choice, we Canadians filled with pride think that it is a terrible thing that everybody is not in heaven, and it breaks God's heart that not everybody will be in heaven, but we should view it that even having one person in heaven is a miracle of God that required the death of God, the Son of

God, upon the cross, to bear the desolation and the judgment that you and I deserve. If you could put it up, Andrew, I've turned it into a prayer.

Dear God, I thank you that by your grace, the judgment that I deserved fell on Jesus, and that you bestowed on me the life that he deserved.

Please grow in me a grateful, humble, trusting knowing of what Jesus did for me. Dear God, I thank you that by your grace, the judgment that I deserved fell on Jesus, and that you bestowed on me the life that he shared, that he deserved.

[ 37 : 41 ] Please grow in me a grateful, humble, trusting knowing of what Jesus did for me. That's the context to understand this. I mean, there's other issues, but that's no Christian can understand the whole issue of judgment without first thinking about the cross.

And, you know, this is a profound, if any of you are here and you have this sense of doom about your life, if any of you are here struggling with shame, that there is something that's not just that you've done wrong things, but that there's something fundamentally wrong for you, if you are here thinking that fundamentally bad things are going to happen to you, that good things will never happen to you, if doom characterizes your life, the story of the gospel is the doom that you deserved fell on Jesus, and the life that he deserved is offered to you today.

All because Jesus loves you. We have to wrap this up. And some of you might be saying, George, you haven't even started to talk about the second coming of Jesus yet.

But, by the way, one of the things that I do here, you know, it would be a very different sermon if I took Matthew and Mark and Luke and tried to show how they were all similar and how they were all different. In our Going Deeper this week, I just, those of you who do Going Deeper, which is in the bulletin, I give you the three parallel texts, and you can look at them and talk about the similarities and differences in the same text.

We're just camping in Luke. One of the things to understand about the destruction of Jerusalem, and especially comes if you look at Matthew's account of it, is that in some ways, it's almost as if what happens in Jerusalem is maybe like a bit of a prototype or a bit of a precursor of what the end might be, that in some ways, Jerusalem will probably be involved in whatever the end is.

[ 39 : 32 ] And even here in Jesus' teaching, he basically implies that Israel will come back together again, that there will be a Jewish nation and Jewish people. But Jesus goes and moves very, very quickly into now into the fact that literally, literally, and I mean literally the way people used to mean literally as meaning not sort of like vaguely like, but I actually like literally, literally, literally.

It's really hard because there used to be a word called literally that meant something and now literally doesn't mean what it literally used to mean for all people. And so somebody needs to reinvent a word that now means what literally used to mean like 10 years ago.

But I mean like actual, okay? Jesus actually says that he will return and he uses the title, he uses constantly throughout the Gospel of Luke, the title of the Son of Man.

In fact, just before we read it, if you could put up the next point, Andrew, as the prayer to sort of remind us of this. Dear God, please grow in me an ever-deepening confidence and longing for the

return of Jesus Messiah.

Dear God, please grow in me an ever-deepening confidence and longing for the return of Jesus Messiah. This is the flip side of what I said earlier about students and academics and over-educated people like myself that not only do we have to rid our minds of messianic and utopian visions and movements, but we have to grasp and be gripped by the real return of Jesus. [ 41 : 01 ] And here's what he says in verse 25. And there will be signs and sun and moon and stars and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves.

People fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. This, verses 25 and 26, are up until now it's been non-signs.

These are signs. And then verse 27. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up, raise your heads because your redemption, your glorification is drawing near.

One of the things that divides Christians is whether you're post-millennial, pre-millennial, amillennial. And if you're pre-millennial, are you pre-millennial dispensationalist or historic pre-millennial?

And if you're pre-millennial, are you pre-trib, mid-trib, or post-trib? And those actually divide churches and Christians.

[ 42 : 08 ] And what I'd like to suggest is that we have to act, you know, everybody, if you haven't read it, you should go and read the C.S. Lewis Narnia Chronicle book called The Silver Chair, which has Puddleglum the Marsh Wiggle.

And in The Silver Chair, Aslan gives these two kids a task, which is that they have to go and rescue the crown prince of Narnia from The Wicked Witch.

And he said, I'm going to give you some help, which is this Puddleglum the Marsh Wiggle. And he gives them, I think it's four signs. And he gives them these four signs that they are to seek and follow. And if they follow them, they'll find the prince and they'll be successful.

And he tells them what they are. He has them memorize them. And he says, yes, they have to memorize them every day. And of course, part of the dynamic of the book is they squabble, they fight, they, you know, they do all these things.

They forget the signs and they remember the signs. But every one of the signs, eventually they come to, they eventually recognize the sign and it does leave them to the prince. And I won't tell you anything more in case it spoils the end of the book.

[ 43 : 14 ] But here's the thing. We spend way too much time learning theories about the second coming of Jesus when we should just really probably try to remember the signs of the second coming of Jesus.

In fact, it would probably be a point of unity amongst Christians if we said, well, okay, you can be premillennial, pre-trib, you know, blah, blah, blah. And you can be amillennial, you can be this. Let's just all memorize the signs.

Because it could be that we're so busy arguing about the theory that we forget what the signs are and miss the end, which would be deeply, deeply, deeply ironic. And we'll probably make God chuckle and just at how foolish us biped human beings are.

Here's the thing. Andrew, the next point. Dear God, please help me to remember the signs and the non-signs of the return of Jesus Messiah. Dear God, please help me to remember the signs and the non-signs of the return of Jesus Messiah.

Look at them again for verse 25 and 26. And I want to say something here. So people like me stand up on stages like this, but usually when they do it, there's like 4,000 or 5,000 people and there's a television show and all of that.

[ 44 : 23 ] None of that. We don't have that. But usually what they'll do is they'll tell you when they say, and there will be signs and sun and moon and stars and on the earth distress of nations and perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

And then they'll tell you exactly what that means and looks like. Okay? I'm going to get in trouble, but I'm going to say it. I won't get in trouble with you guys because, you know, you come here and most of you are more or less like me. Here's the thing.

Anybody who tells you that they know what these things are and what are liberal and sort of what are literal and what are symbolic, they don't know. They can't know.

They can never know. When it happens, then we'll say, oh, I guess that was literal. I guess that was symbolic.

Until it happens, you won't know what's literal and what's symbolic. You just won't. You can't. So just remember the signs. Just remember the signs.

[ 45 : 30 ] I guess I think just with the time, let's just read the text and then I'll just wrap it all up. Remember I said to you a little bit earlier about the, this actually doesn't lead us to inaction, but to action.

And let's look at verse 29. And he told them a parable. Look at the fig tree and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that summer is already near.

So also when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

And just sort of pause. Generation probably means that the end will come suddenly and the people who begin to see the signs will be there to see the end of the whole thing. It could also mean, because of some odd oddities in the Greek language, it could mean that the Jewish people will always survive until the second coming of Jesus.

But the important thing here, it's the memory verse for the week, is heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. It's the Christian basis for us understanding the New Testament that it needed to be written.

[ 46 : 40 ] That Jesus says that his words and teaching will not pass away. And what we have in the New Testament is the words of Jesus and the teaching of Jesus recorded for us to read.

Andrew, if you could put up the sixth point. Dear God, please help me to read the Bible knowing that heaven and earth will pass away, but that the words and teaching of Jesus will not pass away.

Dear God, please help me to read the Bible knowing that heaven and earth will pass away, but that the words and teaching of Jesus will not pass away. You know, the reason I accept this as being true is because I believe that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

That it vindicates and justifies what he taught. That he's my savior. And that therefore, when I read all of the Bible, I read all of the Bible mindful that heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of Jesus will not pass away.

And that's to be the filter of how I understand, why I understand that the Bible is important. I need to get it into my mind, into my heart, and into my will, and into my heart, into my soul.

[ 47 : 49 ] I need to get it into me. I need to have it for me. I need to trust it. I need to build my life upon it. I need to preach it. I need to teach it. I need to bear witness to it. Because the one who died for me, who bore my judgment, and defeated sin and death and hell and all hostile spiritual powers, he truly rose from the dead.

And one final prayer. Andrew, if you could put it up, this will be our closing prayer. Dear God, please make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel, who daily rises from prayer to stand straight with head held high, to bear witness to you, and to do good, all for your glory.

When those of us were going into the lawyers' meetings because of the lawsuit that was made against the church, you know, that's what we'd sort of do.

We wouldn't sort of go in like this. You'd realize that the way you go in is you stand straight, head held high, and you go in. And while the world has been overcome with the fear of all of these things, and while we go from one utopia to another, all of which fail, the Bible here is saying that we get on our knees in prayer, we think about the words of Jesus, then we stand straight with our heads held high, and we go out to do good.

See, the thing is, the Bible tells us that poverty will never be eradicated, but it also tells us that we have a constant obligation for the poor. The Bible tells us that there will never be a time of universal prosperity, but the Bible tells us that we are to pray for the prosperity and work for the prosperity and the blessing of this city and of this nation.

[ 49 : 38 ] And so, we are to go ahead and we are to do that. We are to do that confident that God is sovereign over history, that Jesus, who is the same one who died upon the cross and rose again, is the same one who will return, that our labor is not in vain, that we do not have to try to wait to help a particular poor person until we figure out how to eradicate all of poverty, that we are to care for the poor in this city, that we are to pray for the prosperity of this city, that if you're a young man or a young woman or an old man or an old woman and you have an entrepreneurial bend, start that business.

Hire people. That we are to be aware of the poor in our neighborhood and we are to try to feed them and we are to try to go out and do what we can to help them. And if you're in politics, well then you can't just think in terms of politics in terms of powerful interest groups, but you have to be aware of how the economy affects the poor and you have to be aware of how to work an economy and pray to try to figure out how to work the economy.

Use the best of your mind so that it leads to prosperity for our nation and prosperity for our city. That these texts, they give us a ground for hope. And so we believe the words of Jesus that poverty will never be eradicated, but we also believe the words of Jesus that we are to care for the poor.

We're to believe the Bible that there will not be, that Star Trek is false. But then we're also to believe the Bible and to pray and work for the prosperity of the city.

We get on our knees and pray. We think and read God's word. We trust the words of Jesus and then we stand up straight with our head held high and we do good and bear witness all for the glory of God.

[ 51 : 19 ] Please stand. You've been very patient. I went a little bit longer than usual and I had to skip over some of the passage, but you know, this is such a glorious, glorious, glorious hope hope.

And it's just so like God that he would even place into this thing which gives harbingers of the end the fact that Jesus' words were even fulfilled in Jerusalem and Judea in the late 60s, within 30, 35 years of the death and resurrection, of Jesus speaking these words.

So my prayer for you is that you'll have a deep confidence in Jesus and a deep confidence in his word. And that if you do not yet know Jesus, if you haven't given your life to Jesus, that you just call out with your heart and say, Jesus, thank you that you died upon the cross for me.

Thank you that you took my place. Thank you that bestow upon me life. Jesus, be in my life. I want to be in your life. Be my savior. I want to follow you as Lord. There's no better time than today to say such a prayer.

And for all of us, those who've taken that step, then just pray the mission of the church over ourselves. Father, make me a disciple of Jesus gripped by the gospel who lives for your glory.

[ 52 : 41 ] That's a prayer we can pray for ourselves every day of our lives. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us.

Cleanse us and cause us to reject all false messiahs and utopias and all messianic and utopian visions. Father, help us to put those things to death in us.

And Father, at the same time, we ask that you help us to be gripped by what Jesus did for us on the cross. Be gripped by the fact that his word is true and that it will never fail, that we can build our lives around it and upon it.

And Father, grip us with the promise of his return. Grip us, Father, with this. May this, Father, be our blessed hope. Fan into flame within us an ever deeper longing and yearning for the return of Jesus.

Fan into flame within us an ever deeper longing and yearning to be with him, to see his face, to have him see us. Father, make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who live day by day to do good and to bring you glory, all to your glory, bearing witness to you, all to your glory.

[ 53 : 50 ] Father, make us such disciples. And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.