

A City Under Siege

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[0 : 00] I don't know about you guys, but I've always been super, super inquisitive about what the future holds for me. Always really keen to know what's coming in the future.

And I remember clearly when I was about five or six years old, in grade prep, my mum's tucking me into bed and I said to her, kind of outlined for her what the future was going to hold for me.

I told her that I was going to be a National Park Ranger, that I was going to own a Ford Maverick four-wheel drive, five-door long wheelbase, not three-door short wheelbase. And I was going to marry an Asian girl.

So that was the plan and none of that has come to pass. But that was my plan and I was really super keen to know what was going to happen in the future.

And I don't know if you're the same way, but a lot of people want to know what's going to happen to them in the future. That's why we've got, you know, the stars in the newspaper. We've got people doing weird stuff with crystals and palm readings.

[1 : 00] And people are keen to know what's going to happen. And people are anxious to know what's going to happen in the future. A lot of my pastoral conversations with people are about, you know, they want to know who are they going to marry?

What job are they going to have? These kind of things pertaining to the future. And the cool thing is about tonight's sermon and next week's sermon from Luke 21. The cool thing is that we get to hear from Jesus Christ, who's going to give a sure and certain knowledge about the future.

In this passage and in this chapter, Jesus talks to his disciples about two future events that are going to happen after he says these words.

One of them is the destruction of Jerusalem. This is a historical fact that happened, an historical event in AD 70. Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans. He told them about that around 40 years beforehand.

He also talks about his return and the end of the world, the rolling up of history. So we have to work really hard tonight, okay? We're going to need to work together. You're going to need to listen carefully.

[2 : 05] Because we need to unravel what Jesus is saying so that we can understand what he's saying about the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in AD 70.

And the coming of Jesus, the second coming of Jesus, the end of the world, which is obviously yet to come. That's what we're going to look at tonight. This week is going to be mainly about the destruction of Jerusalem.

Next week we're going to talk about the end of the world, okay? So I'd love to pray for us. We're going to need help with this one. So why don't we bow our heads and pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for your word and we thank you that Jesus gives us in this word sure and certain knowledge about the future.

I pray that we trust him and that we'd obey him and that you'd help us to understand this word tonight. In Jesus' name, amen. Make sure you've got a Bible open to Luke 21.

We're going to go through, walk through it together and see what God has for us. So let's start verse 5 and 6. When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, Jesus said, As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another and all will be thrown down.

[3 : 25] So Jesus here, just to give you a bit of context, we're in the last few days of his life. We've had the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Palm Sunday.

It's about four days before Good Friday when Jesus dies and he's just teaching like a trooper. Like he's just teaching, teaching, teaching his disciples.

Because he knows that he's about to die. He's known the whole way through that he was going to die on a cross for the sins of the world. And so he's teaching them intensely so that they'll know what to do when he goes.

And so we need to be the same way here. We need to listen to Jesus' teaching because we need to rely on Jesus' teaching to know what's going to happen in the future, how to discern the events that are going to happen in the future.

So I want to ask you guys, are you plugged into God's word? Are you reading God's word? Are you reading this teaching that Jesus has given us? It's so important to be plugged into this if we're going to stand the test of time, if we're going to endure and inherit eternal life with Jesus.

[4 : 30] So we want to be plugged into the Bible, not just on a Sunday night, but throughout the week. And so this is why Jesus is teaching. He wants his disciples to know what to do when he goes. And so they come across, in the midst of this teaching, they come across the temple.

And the temple in Jerusalem was just an incredible building, just an immense building, dominated the landscape there in Jerusalem. And Josephus, the historian, non-Christian historian, we're going to hear a bit from him tonight.

He describes the temple incredibly. He says that during this period of time, Herod the Great was doing a bit of a reno on the temple, a bit of refurbishment, and he enlarged the temple by 400 by 500 yards, double the size of the temple.

And this took place from 19 BC right up to 64 AD, right before it got destroyed. Massive works going on there. And he describes just the immensity of the building.

He said they had white marble stones, 75 feet long, 12 feet high, 18 feet wide. Massive, big stones. He also says that they had gates and doors that were coated in gold and silver.

[5 : 46] They had gold and silver plates hanging from the temple. And the beautiful stones that are mentioned here in this passage. He says it made the temple look like a snow-clad mountain shining in the sun.

So that's the temple. Just brilliant, immense building. Another historian, Tacitus, said that the temple was immensely opulent. Immensely opulent building.

And you've got these disciples who came out of Galilee, which is a little hick town, a bit like Diamond Creek where I grew up. Like the church is the biggest building in that town. And same for them. There weren't a whole lot of big buildings.

And they would come up as little boys to Jerusalem. And they would see the temple and be blown away by this building. And they'd come up each year for the feasts and just be mesmerized by this building. And even now, you know, in their early 20s, maybe late teens, they've come with Jesus and they're blown away by this building.

Dominates the landscape. I wonder if you've ever been enthralled by something that humanity has created.

[6 : 55] A building or a bridge or some kind of landmark. That's how they're feeling now. And then Jesus comes in and drops this bomb. Verse 6, The Lord of the universe looks at the temple and he's not impressed.

He's not blown away. He pronounces judgment on it. And you can imagine the disciples, they're stunned. This building that represents for them their Jewish religious heritage, tradition.

Jesus is saying that this building is going to be destroyed. And they can't believe it. I felt exactly the same way. I've got to tell you. Late August 2001, I was in New York standing before the Twin Towers, the World Trade Center.

And I was blown away by the immensity of that building. The fact that it was so symmetrical and so huge dominated that area of the city. And yet, less than a month later, a couple of weeks later, I was back in Melbourne watching the whole thing drop to the ground.

Jesus is not impressed or overwhelmed by the temple. He says, Not one stone will be left upon another. You can imagine the disciples want to know what's going on here.

[8 : 21] They want to know when's this going to happen. What's going to be the sign? It's like if I said to you, St. Paul's Cathedral is going to be ash and dust pretty soon. You're going to want to know when's it going to happen.

How do we know this is going to happen? And so they ask in verse 7, Teacher, when will this be? And what will be the sign that it's about to take place? So they ask him two questions, don't they?

When is it going to happen? And what are the signs? How are we going to know? Jesus answers one of those questions. He doesn't answer when it's going to happen. We're going to see this next week when we talk about Jesus' return.

He never tells us when it's going to happen because he wants us to stay alert. He wants us to be ready at all times. So he answers one of their questions with the signs that are going to lead up to this thing.

But this is where it gets a bit tricky because when he talks about the signs, in some parts of this passage he's talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and in some parts of the passage he's talking about the end of the world and his return.

[9 : 26] And so we need to figure this out. When is he talking about what? And the thing is too that those two events, the destruction of Jerusalem that happened in year 70 and he's coming again, they're related but they're different.

They're very distinct but they're related. They're distinct because the destruction of Jerusalem happened in AD 70. It's a historical event. It's a one-off event.

It's temporal. It's done. The coming of Jesus and the end of the world is going to be a once-for-all event. It's going to roll up all of history.

It's going to be the end of all things. So they're different but they're related because the destruction of Jerusalem, I need you to hear this. The destruction of Jerusalem is a typological example of what's going to happen at the end of the world.

So it's a symbol of what's going to happen to all things at the end of the world. Do you get that? And for these disciples, these devout Jews, this is important for them to see the difference because for them the destruction of the temple would happen when the Messiah returns and at that same time the end of all things would happen.

[10 : 37] The destruction of all things, the redemption of all things and so they've got an idea that these things will happen at the same time but Jesus needs to explain that the destruction of Jerusalem will happen in AD 70, though he doesn't say the date.

The end of the world, well it's yet to come. It's been 2,000 years and it's still yet to come. So let's try and tease this out a bit. We're mainly going to look at the destruction of Jerusalem but the first two verses, Jesus is going to talk about the end of the world.

Let's look at verse 8 and 9 together. Jesus said, Beware that you are not led astray. That's like the banner that's hanging over this whole chapter. Beware that you are not led astray.

For many will come in my name and say, I am he and the time is near. Do not go after them. When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified for these things must take place first.

But the end, the end of the world, will not follow immediately. So here he's talking about the end of the world, yet to come. And his major concern for us here is that we would not be led astray.

[11 : 50] He says that before the end of the world, all kinds of theological nutjobs and weirdos and false prophets are going to come out of the woodwork and say, I'm Jesus or the end is near.

I picked this book up. It's a free book. That's why I got it. I was on Google. You might have seen this guy just flooded Google with Google ads for this book.

2008, God's Final Witness. The prophesied end time reveals the demise of the United States and the beginning of man's final war. In case you didn't know, the world was going to end at the end of 2008.

It was going to be December 28th, I think. So if you missed that, that's a shame. I went to this guy's website. I got the book. So he had a little win there.

But I went to the website and he's changed his mind. It's going to be Pentecost 2012. So keep your eyes open for that. People like this man are the false prophets that Jesus is talking about in this passage.

[12 : 50] These are the guys that he's telling us not to follow. Don't buy their books unless you want to belittle them in front of a large group of people. People are going to come, Jesus says, and they're going to say, I know when the end time is.

Follow me. There's a guy in the 70s and 80s who sold 7 million books talking about the end times. Nothing ever came of it, but he made a lot of money.

Gallible, naive Christians buy these books and are deceived. And so Jesus says, don't be that guy. Don't be that girl. Don't be deceived. Along with theological nutjobs and weirdos and false prophets, Jesus says, in addition to this, before the end comes, there are going to be wars, rebellions, and it's

all going to be part and parcel of living in the end times.

We are living in the end times, by the way. Every day since Jesus' resurrection, the end times. And this is part and parcel of living in the end times.

And Jesus wants to reassure us, I think, and just let us know that this is just going to be part of the deal for us. It's just going to be the wave that we need to ride. So I had quite a few people, actually, surprisingly, I thought, come to me in the wake of these terrible bushfires and tell me, look, this is a sign of the end times.

[14 : 20] The end is going to be coming real soon. This is a sign. And, you know, maybe. But definitely not necessarily. Jesus says, this is going to be part and parcel of living in the end times, and things aren't necessarily going to end immediately after that.

Verse 9, These things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately. This is so important, this next verse, guys.

This is pivotal that we hear what Jesus says here, because at verse 10, we have a changing of gears in Jesus' teaching. In Luke, whenever you see the words, then he said to them, Jesus is introducing a new teaching.

So I think it's here, verse 10, that he switches from talking about the end of the world and starts talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. This is how I interpret these verses.

And so as we untangle what Jesus has to say about Jerusalem and the end times, this is really important for us to get. Remember, the destruction of Jerusalem is a historical event.

[15 : 31] It happened in the year 70, and this is what Jesus is about to talk about, about to prophesy about. Let's read it, verse 10. Then he said to them, Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. Now, incredibly, everything here that Jesus said was fulfilled in detail in the 30-odd years after he said this.

Between Jesus' death, a few days after he said this, and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, so about 37 years, all of this stuff was fulfilled in detail.

So I've got a few historical facts here. There were several in that period, several uprisings and rebellions against the Romans, just as he said. Far more than in the preceding period and the period afterwards.

In the year 61, there was a severe earthquake in Friggia, which just absolutely decimated the area around it, to the point where the Romans stopped collecting taxes for five years, because the devastation was so bad.

[16 : 44] And if you know the Romans and how much they like taxes, that's a big deal. Five years. I guess a little bit like the major banks suspending interest on people who have mortgages.

That's a big deal for a bank to do that. A little bit like this. The devastation was so bad that the Romans suspended taxes in that area after that great earthquake, year 61. Year 63, Mount Vesuvius erupted and completely decimated the town of Pompeii.

You might have read about that in your history class. In addition, there were several plagues in the reign of Claudius, as well as a famine. You get that in Acts 11. Widespread famine in that time, along with plagues and pestilences.

All of this is stuff that Jesus said would happen in that period. In 66 AD, after a Jewish rebellion, this is when the Romans come into Jerusalem and encircle the city.

So they came in in 66 and then between 66 and 70, that's when the city is under siege and it eventually leads to its complete and utter destruction in AD 70.

[17 : 51] In addition to that, the non-Christian historian Josephus tells us that there was a comet over the city of Jerusalem, a comet in the sky, in the form of a sword, he says.

It stayed there for many days and nights in the time of that rebellion in 66. It's just as Jesus said, there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven or in the heavens.

And all that to say that Jesus knows what he's talking about when he talks about the future. Jesus is the Lord of the universe. Jesus writes history, past, present, future.

And he knows what he's talking about when he talks about the future. So as we go into next week, where Jesus talks about the end of the world, we can trust him to tell us the truth and not lead us astray like this man does.

Let's move on. Verse 12 to 19. This is where Jesus tells his disciples what needs to happen before that destruction happens. So we've looked at what happens when the city is destroyed.

[18 : 58] Before that happens, a bunch of stuff needs to happen. Listen to this. Verse 12. But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you.

They will hand you over to synagogues and prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. So before we go on, let's just get this timeline straight. This is really important that we get the timeline straight.

Number one, Christians will be persecuted, arrested, thrown into prison. You get that in the rest of the New Testament. You see that. It's obvious that that's what happens. Right throughout the New Testament, you see the disciples, everyone who believes in Jesus gets completely done over.

They get dragged into prison. They get beaten up. It's obvious that that happens. That's number one. Then there will be rebellions, earthquakes, pestilence, famine, plague, signs from heaven.

That's historical fact. We get that from non-Christian sources at the time. Then, verse 20, we're going to drop down and look at verse 20 and 21. Jerusalem will be surrounded by enemies.

[20 : 02] Jesus says, When you see Jerusalem surrounded by enemies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains and those inside the city must leave it and those out in the country must not enter it.

This is amazing. This is actually what happened. AD 66, Christians in Jerusalem saw the city, the siege of the city begin. They saw the Romans marching into the city and they recalled these words from Luke.

They recalled that Jesus had given them these signs and they fled the city. They thought, Jesus has given us this sign. He said that Jerusalem would be surrounded by enemies and so they got together and they left.

They crossed the River Jordan, went to a town called Pella, which is in the Decapolis. outside of, over the cross of the Jordan, in modern day Jordan. See, they saw the sign coming that Jesus had prophesied 30 years before.

They interpreted God's word and took it literally and they were saved because of that. Fascinating to see Jesus' prophecy and the effect it had on the early Christians.

[21 : 14] That's a matter of history. Christians were saved because they saw the signs that Jesus told them about. Well, guys, we can see from the benefit of history, can't we, that Jesus' words can be trusted when it comes to the future.

Extra-biblical sources confirming what Jesus said in these times. And so, we can be sure that Jesus is telling the truth when he talks about our future and the end of the world.

Just by way of conclusion, I really wanted to look by way of application at verses 13 to 19. I think we can get a lot out of this in our lives as Christians today.

So, let's have a look at this to finish. Verse 13. Jesus says, all this calamity, persecution, being dragged before governors, this will give you an opportunity to testify.

This is true, isn't it? We can see throughout Acts, people like Paul got dragged before governors, they got thrown into prison and they preached to the governors and they preached to the prison guards.

[22 : 26] They just saw it as an opportunity to do evangelism. It's incredible. They obeyed Jesus and took the opportunities that he gave them even if it was persecution. And so, we should see the same opportunity, shouldn't we?

You start getting a little bit of opposition at school or at work, people start making fun of you, not necessarily trying to kill you like they did these people, but trying to take you down.

We need to see that as an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus. If someone makes fun of you for being a Christian, then you can say to them, yeah, I am a Christian. Jesus has made some really intense, incredible, world-breaking claims about himself.

You need to have a look at these claims. I think they are true. Sit down and start witnessing to them about Jesus. They're not necessarily times in our lives that we should dread.

They're actually opportunities for evangelism and that's what the early Christians did and that's what we should do today. What about verse 14? Jesus says to them, so make up your minds not to prepare your defence in advance, for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict.

[23 : 37] Again, we saw this with people like Stephen. They were just given words to say in the midst of persecution as they preached Jesus Christ and it's the same for us. It doesn't mean, these words, it doesn't mean that we can't learn about strategies and apologetics and stuff that we can say to answer tough questions because Peter says in his letters that we should be prepared to give an answer when people ask us about our faith but it does mean that we shouldn't be too worried when people come to us with hard questions.

A lot of you guys, the main reason you tell me that you don't do evangelism and I get this, I hear it, it's the hard questions, not knowing if you'll have the right answer or not knowing enough about this science or about whatever.

Jesus reassures us, I've given you my Holy Spirit, I will provide you with answers to give these people. Even if it's just a simple testimony about your faith in Jesus and the difference he's made in your life.

So be encouraged by that. It's what the early Christians did, again it's what we should do too. Trust in the Holy Spirit to give you words. Verse 16 to 17 Jesus says you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends and they will put some of you to death.

You'll be hated by all because of my name. Again, the reality for the disciples, they were betrayed, they were disowned by family. It happens today in areas of the globe, perhaps not here but I was talking to a guy in Queensland a couple of years ago who was a Muslim guy who became a Christian and it was his own brother who tipped it off to the authorities that he had become a Christian so he had to flee the country.

[25 : 22] And this happens in subtler ways, I know with you guys, more subtle ways. I was speaking to one of you the other week and you were saying it's just hard being excited about being a Christian, about being fired up about evangelism and about the Bible and about doing ministry because your family sees you as being a little bit weird when you get too interested in Christianity.

It's okay if it's a little kind of private belief but as soon as it becomes something that you're really passionate about then maybe you've been brainwashed or you're part of a cult or something like that. So subtle forms of persecution that get to us even from our own family and friends.

Jesus says that's going to be the reality and you've just got to suck it up in a way and get on with it. It's just part and parcel of being in the end times and we need to support each other in the midst of that.

Verse 18 to 19 some good promises here. He says not a hair of your head will perish by your endurance you will gain your souls. That's not to say that you won't be killed by the way.

When he says not a hair of your head will perish that's not to say that one of us won't be killed for our faith or the people won't be killed for their faith because he said in verse 16 that you might be put to death. So he doesn't mean that.

[26 : 36] What he means is eternally speaking not a hair of your head will perish. You will inherit eternal life. Imperishable life. Because by your endurance you will inherit your soul or you will gain your soul.

The disciples who stuck it out to the end even when they had their head chopped off or when they were crucified upside down not a hair of their head perished because they inherited eternal life in paradise with Jesus.

And same with you guys. If you get through the persecution and opposition and continue to witness to Jesus Christ and hold on to your faith Jesus says you will inherit your souls.

You will gain your souls. You will spend eternity with him. Guys you might get ostracised. You might get persecuted.

You might get killed for believing in Jesus and for witnessing to Jesus. But that's the path that we walk in these end times.

[27 : 43] It's part and parcel of living in the end times. So two points then to summarise as we look forward to next week's message. We talk about the end of all things.

Number one, Jesus can be trusted when he speaks about the future. He knows what he's talking about. He's seen it all. We need to trust him with what he says. So come prepared next week to hear sure and certain truth about Jesus, from Jesus, about the future.

Number two, as we approach Jesus' return, we need to be bold in proclaiming the truth about Jesus. We need to be bold in witnessing. Just because it's socially awkward or because we might be ostracised gives us no excuse not to tell our friends about Jesus.

He's coming again and he's going to judge your friends who aren't Christians and it's not going to be good for them. So witness to people about the truth of Jesus, about the fact that he died on the cross for their sins, to bring them into relationship with God.

Jesus will reward you in heaven when he returns. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thanks for giving us sure and certain knowledge about the future.

[29 : 05] Thank you with the benefit of history that we can see that you knew exactly what you were talking about, the destruction of Jerusalem. I pray that that would give us confidence to know that you know what you're saying when you talk about the end of all things.

Give us courage to tell our friends and even our enemies about you. I pray that you would bring in hundreds, thousands, of converts through these people as they witness to what you've done for us on the cross.

Keep our eyes focused on the cross as we approach Easter over the coming weeks. I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.