

Luke 21 • Prophecies Concerning Jerusalem and the End Times

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

We are in Luke chapter 21. Open the Bible to Luke chapter 21. This is a really interesting and important chapter for us to study today. Because it has a lot to say about the last days. And I've said to you guys many times that I believe that we are in the last days of the last days.

And the last days is that time period that really began with the inauguration of the Church. And it goes all the way to the point where the Lord comes to catch away His Church in what we call the Rapture. And that is all considered the last days.

We're in the last days. We've known that. We've been in the last days for 2,000 years. But we believe that the stage is being set in such a way that, we are truly in the last days of the last days. No, we're not setting dates by any stretch of the imagination. But we're just seeing again, the stage being set.

This is a really important chapter. I think we'll find some important insights in it. Anyway, let's go into this with prayer. And then we'll see what the Lord has for us.

Heavenly Father, we bow before we open up the Word just because we know that it is through You and Your Spirit that the Word is made alive. And Lord we confess to You today our great need of You, to enlighten our hearts, to open our eyes. To open the eyes of our hearts to understand the Word. And then also Lord, just to apply it to those areas of our lives that are most applicable. Use this time, Father, to really speak to us. And we ask that You would do it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. Amen.

I want you to remember that time wise, we are in the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry. Okay? Chapter 21, if you'll notice in your Bible, begins in verse 1 by saying that,

"Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, 2 and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. 4 For they all contributed

out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."
(ESV)

I want you to stop there if you would please. Just for a moment. This account of the poor widow is one that stands out in the Scripture. Not just because it's in this last week of Jesus' earthly ministry. But just that Jesus would take notice during that last week. I mean, He knows what's about to happen. And yet He takes notice of this humble widow.

And not just this humble widow. But her very humble offering, which we're told amounts to a couple of copper coins. Maybe a fraction of a penny, or something like that. But He takes note of it because, as He says here, she put in everything. She put in all that she had to live on. And that's just flat out amazing.

And truth be told, I don't really, I don't know where you are in terms of the prosperity of whatever God is doing in your life. But we really can't relate much to what we're seeing in this passage. Because we have so much abundance in terms of our possessions. We could go for a long time just getting rid of our junk before we even got around to giving away all we had to live on. You know what I mean?

I mean, we prove it every summer by having yard sales. And we litter our garage or our driveways with our junk. And this is just stuff we want to get rid of. And people come over and they want to add to their junk and so they buy it. But you'll notice when you go to a yard sale, there's these signs inside their garage, usually, if they even let you in there. And they usually have signs in there that say, oh, this isn't for sale. This is our... This is the junk we're keeping. We may not use it or even look at it. But we're hanging on to this stuff right over here.

To be completely honest with you, we have a whole lot more in common with the rich people in this passage than we do this woman. And what is so important about this passage, is that the point of it is, that Jesus is making us aware that in God's economy, He measures giving very differently than do we. We tend to think of it in terms of amounts and so forth. But to God, it's not the issue of the size that matters most. It's more the level of the sacrifice that was involved in the giving of that thing.

Because you see, sacrifice tells what's really going on in the heart. If I give to you something out of my abundance and I don't feel it in the sense of having any kind of a sacrificial heart about the whole thing, it's... I mean, it doesn't mean you're going to appreciate it any less necessarily. But from my standpoint

as a giver, I was just giving extra what I had. But when we give to the point where it actually affects our convenience and our comfort, then we start to give on a real level that God begins to take notice of. And that's what's going on here in this passage.

Just some things to think about as it relates to giving. It's just important for you and I to remember God doesn't see these things the way you and I see them. He sees them very differently. And that's important to remember.

Now, as we move on in this chapter, we're going to see that there's some very important things Jesus is going to speak about here related to the last days. And we know that Jesus would stay in the city. And usually at the temple where He would preach and teach during the day. But at the end of the day, they would leave the temple and they would go to wherever they were staying for the night. And this is one of those occasions when they're leaving the temple. And a conversation begins between Jesus and His disciples about the temple. And they begin to call attention to the grandeur of the temple.

But if you look with me beginning in verse 5. It says, *"And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones (and they were enormous) and offerings, he said, "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."*

And with that statement Jesus begins a discourse that is covered in Matthew, in Mark's Gospel account, and then here, of course obviously, in Luke. And in this discourse, He is going to engage in a prophetic idea or theme that is important for you and I to recognize before we get into it.

Can I have your attention while we do this? Because it's important that you don't read ahead. Because if you don't plan to understand how this passage is being presented, you're going to get mixed up.

And here's what's going on. This discourse that we're about to read here throughout the rest really, of the chapter, Jesus employs an idea whereby, He speaks of an event that is going to be soon to come. And that is the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. And from this standpoint it's probably about 30 to 35 years in the future. Not that long. But at the same time, He's going to make reference to something that the fall of Jerusalem foreshadows. And that is the Great Tribulation. And He's going to talk about them simultaneously.

But there will be certain comments that He makes that refer only to the fall of Jerusalem. And some comments that refer to the global aspect of the Great Tribulation. But they are going to be spoken of together. Right? And you have to be listening for the language that's used. Because He's speaking of events that are very, very similar because one event foreshadows the other. This is called the Principle of Double Reference. Let me put that up on the screen for you, for those of you taking notes. That's what it's called,

The Principle of Double Reference

The Principle of Double Reference and it is used throughout the course of Scripture many times. And if you're not aware of it, you're going to read prophetic Scripture and you're going to find it confusing. Let me give you what I felt was one of the better definitions of the law, or The Principle of Double Reference.

The Principle of Double Reference

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The Bible includes prophecies which seem to focus on the immediate historical context of the prophet, yet which also speak of a more complete fulfillment later (on) This tendency to speak of events that are separated by time, as though they are not (separated by time) is called the principle of double reference.

And so again, Jesus is going to talk about the fall of Jerusalem, and he's going to talk about the Great Tribulation. All right.

Now, at our time frame, these events are separated right now. Well, I mean, the Great Tribulation hasn't happened yet. Right now we're looking at... There's 2,000 years now, between, if the Great Tribulation were to happen, like starting tomorrow. And there may be more years to come. And certainly, most likely, will be. But we're going to understand this from the standpoint of using this principle of double reference. And I think that you're going to see how these things all come together.

Let's read again verse 6, and then get into it. Verse 6 is a statement that Jesus makes where He says, *"As for these things that you see, (meaning the temple) the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."*

And, of course, that's exactly what happened when the Romans came in A.D. 70. And broke into the city of Jerusalem and essentially, razed the temple. And literally, not one stone of these enormous stones, was left on top of another.

But this, of course, elicits some questions from the disciples. Look with me beginning in verse 7 in your Bible. It says, *"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 And he said, 'See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them."* All right. It's interesting. Let's stop there for a moment.

It's interesting isn't it that the immediate question of the disciples, all has to do with timing. And that's of course what we're most interested in. When, when, when, when, when. But isn't it, and Jesus will address some when issues here, in His discourse. But do you notice that the first thing He mentions to them isn't really a time related exhortation? It's more about the quality of your faith and your life related to these things.

And He begins to say, well, first off, let's... You need to beware. Because there are going to be false prophets and false messiahs that are going to rise up during the course of this time. And they're going to lead people astray. And the very first thing He gives to you and I, is a warning. Which tells us that's the most important thing we need to be thinking about right off the bat.

This timeframe is going to be dangerous. You'll notice that He says, messiahs will come in My name. First of all, they're going to claim that they are the Messiah. And then secondly, they're going to claim that *"The time is at hand!"* In other words, the time has now come for these things to come to pass. And that means, they're going to set time frames. These false messiahs are going to come along and they're going to say, this is the time, here's the date..., and so forth.

And of course, we've seen this happen many times throughout the centuries. I mean... Good grief! Even just here in America, we've seen those things happen repeatedly. It wasn't that long ago, somebody set a time for the second coming of the Lord. What was it? Eighty some... How many reasons? Ninety some reasons? Ninety-four reasons Jesus is coming in 1995? I forget what it was. Of course, it didn't happen.

Back in the mid 1800s, I don't know how many of you were alive back then? (Pastor Paul raises his hand, jokingly.) A couple of you were. Yeah. Anyway, there was a group called the Millerites. Some of you may know this from your

church history. And they followed a man by the name of William Miller, who was pretty good at drawing a crowd with his very fanciful prophetic interpretations. And his wild speculations related to the coming of Christ. And he set a date. In fact, he said, Jesus will return in 1846. And I tell you, people absolutely went wild over this. I mean, they just, they believed him; just gulped it down, hooked line and sinker.

Well, obviously it didn't happen. And that ushered in a time period in the Church that is actually known as the Great Disappointment believe it or not. And obviously the expectations of people were shattered. Many people fell away from the Church. Many people fell away from Christ. And it was a huge, huge issue.

But there were also groups then, when the Millerites began to dissipate and just fall away. Other groups were spawned out of the Millerite Movement. Most notably the Seventh Day Adventist Church came out of the Millerite Movement.

And the Seventh day Adventist basically, came up with this idea that, okay, Jesus didn't really come in 1846. But He moved His position in 1846 to get ready for the final coming. And they just, we're just trying to continue on the whole Millerite craziness..., and that sort of thing.

Well, I'm just giving you an example from American history, where people have come along and set dates. And gotten people all lathered up about it. But Jesus told us, when somebody comes along and says, this is the time! and I am he, I'm the one..., or so forth. He says, do not go after them. Very important reminder here not to run after these Yahoo's that come along and want to set dates.

And it's amazing to me that there are people that just don't know their Bible enough to know that we're not supposed to listen. We're not supposed to tie into that nonsense. Because the Bible tells us, no man knows the day or the hour. (Matthew 24:36) No man knows the day or the hour. And that includes, William Miller. He didn't know. He was just blowing smoke. So, don't go after them.

Jesus goes on now. Verse 9. Look with me there. *"And when you hear of wars and tumults, (Which is a word to describe "commotion" - it talks about military, political, socioeconomic commotion, uproar. He says,) do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once."*

Now, this is where Jesus begins to use time related wording. Notice He says that, "When you see these commotions going on in the world," He tells us here, "don't be terrified because they have to take place first." Right? That's a "time" word; and then "the end." Another "time word" where he says, "is not to come yet." The wars and commotions and rumors of wars, those are not necessarily end time signs. They're signs leading up to the end. Okay. That's an important distinction.

He goes on in verse 10 to say, "*...Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences.*" And we haven't heard of any of that stuff going on, have we? Yeah, anybody hear in the news about the coronavirus? Everybody's talking about it. We live in this global sort of an informational age, where something happens in China and we hear about it a couple of minutes later. And everybody gets all upset about everything and so forth.

But these sorts of things have been happening for centuries. You and I never lived through the Black Plague, but that was a pestilence. Just like the things that are happening today and have been happening for a long time. However, Jesus is inferring here that as time goes on, these things will build in intensity. That the earthquakes and famines and pestilences will become more pronounced.

And then you'll notice in verse 11, He goes on to say, "*And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.*" All right, now stop there. This is one of those areas where the principle of double reference comes into play. Because remember, He's talking in the short term about the fall of Jerusalem, but in the long-term He's talking about the Great Tribulation.

And this is where He starts referring to the Great Tribulation. Because He's talking here about "*signs from heaven.*" Well, there weren't any of those when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70. But there will be in the Great Tribulation. You can see here that you can pick out statements that are specific to one of the events but not the other. Even though they are spoken as if there's really no time between the two events.

As we get into verse 12, you're going to see that Jesus brings the prophetic view back to the present. And back... Or to the near future to when He's saying these things. And that is the fall of Jerusalem and the persecutions that the believers would endure.

Notice again, He uses time words when He says, "*12 But before all this*" (that He's talking about these cataclysmic things, before all that happens, He says,) "*they will lay...hands on you 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. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 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 or contradict.*"

It doesn't mean they're going to like you when you get done talking. It just means they're not going to be able to answer you. And we saw that when Stephen made his long address in the Book of Acts before the assembled Jews there in Jerusalem. And he was given great wisdom and great insight and they weren't able to contradict him, but they didn't want to hear it. And they killed him instead. (Acts 7:1-59) And Jesus is basically saying that's what's going to be happening.

Notice in verse 16, He says, "*You will be delivered up even by parents* (Okay. There are going to be unbelieving parents) *and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you* (look at this) *they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish.*"

We read this today in our American way of thinking of things. And we think, wait a minute, that doesn't make any sense. He said, some of them are going to die. And then He said in the next breath, but not a head of your hair will perish. That doesn't make any sense. Yes, it does. Because biblically speaking, the word perish means to "suffer eternal loss."

And what Jesus is saying here is, in the persecution and the waves that come upon the Church, some of you will be put to death, but none of you will perish. None of you will suffer eternal loss. All right. That's a very important distinction. And Jesus said elsewhere, the same thing when He said, "don't be afraid of those who can merely kill the body." Right? (Matthew 10:28)

He goes on to say, verse 19, "*By your endurance you will gain your lives.*" And then, just another statement that we see often in the New Testament about patient endurance during a time of suffering. (Hebrews 10:36) And in that way, Jesus says, the believers, the true believers will prove their faith as genuine by their endurance.

And then now in verse 20 and following, Jesus is going to speak more of the imminent fall of Jerusalem. Look at there. He says, "*But when you see*

Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know (this) that its desolation has come near.” Now stop there. *“...when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies,”* all right.

Now I told you that He's talking now about what happened in A.D. 70. And that is true. When the people began to see the Roman army come and gather around the city of Jerusalem, for those who remembered the prophetic statement Jesus made in this discourse, they would have known and understood that this is it. This is it. Jerusalem is about to fall.

But you got to understand that this is a shadow. This is a type, if you will, of the Great Tribulation. And one of the events that will happen in the Great Tribulation. Do you know that during the Tribulation, in fact at the very end of it, Jerusalem will again be under attack? And this time it will be, it won't be the Roman Emperor who's behind it all, it will be the Antichrist.

And the Bible tells us that the Antichrist will amass armies of various Gentile nations that are opposed to Israel. And they will come against Israel and they will kill many people. And they will be on the verge of destroying Jerusalem, once again. And that is when Jesus is going to come back to the earth in what we call the Second Coming. All right. He is going to fight on behalf of Israel against those nations that have assembled in that battle we call Armageddon. And He will deliver His people.

We're talking about two prophetic events here at the same time. And the only difference is, in the first prophetic event – A.D. 70 - Jerusalem was completely conquered and many, many people were killed. And in the second time, still many people will die. But Jesus will rescue Jerusalem, really, at the last minute, if you will. It's going to be a pretty crazy time.

He says in verse 21, *“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 days, or excuse me) ²² for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.”* And of course these words apply both, to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the time of the Great Tribulation.

By the way, in just that very first event that happened in A.D. 70, history records that approximately 1.1 million Jews were killed when the Romans, the Roman army, came and conquered the city. And approximately 100,000 other Jews were taken captive in that single event. We're told that there was not a single Jew left alive in the city.

And that is why Jesus says what He does beginning in verse 23. He says, *"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 against this people. 24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem (here's a credible and very important statement) will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until (when? Now here's another time phrase.) until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* Okay, we have another clue. Jesus giving us a time reference.

And what He's basically talking about is, after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. A.D. 70 okay, you with me? Israel essentially ceased to be a nation. The people were taken away. They were hauled off. And the land of Israel, of course, was there. But it was occupied fully by Gentiles. They ruled the roost. And over the course of the centuries, different nations would come in, conquer whoever happened to be living there. And so on. And so on, And so on.

And finally, the last nation to conquer Israel was Britain. And the British ruled Israel until 1948 when they decided that Israel was reborn as a nation. And they once again recognized her as its own nation. This had never happened to any other people of the world. Never. No nation lost its national identity for that long of a period of time and then regained it. Never. This was a miracle. This was something only God can do.

And it had to happen. We biblically knew it had to happen. We've got the writings of Christians before 1948, that talk about the future. And they'll say in their writings, well, we know one day Israel will again become a nation. And here we are. And some who are in this room today were alive in 1948. And I suspect and were there.

Now what's interesting too, is it wasn't until 1968, which was in my lifetime that the Jews actually got control of Jerusalem. 1968, you guys remember the war in 1968? And that is when the Jews gained that control but it isn't total control even to this day. I mean, there's still a mosque on the temple mount where the mount should be sitting. And you could say that the Jews still have not seen, we have not seen, the end of the trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles. Because they don't have control, total control yet of the area.

But anyway, Jesus goes on here. We're going to see in some of these final comments that He makes that they pertain to the Great Tribulation. Because you will notice a global scale. All right. Notice what He says in verse 25. *"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth."*

Now He's talking about cataclysmic signs in the heavens. Okay. Notice the global scale of this thing. That wasn't what happened in A.D. 70.

He says, There will be *"distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,"* Literally nature is going to be freaking out. We're assuming that by this statement, He's talking about increase in floods and tsunamis and the sort of thing that is going to just cause people to just become incredibly distressed.

It says in verse 26 that, *"people (will be) fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. (Look at this) For the powers of the heavens will be shaken."* Do you see how this is? This has been lifted out now of A.D. 70 and the simple fall of, I say simple. The fall of Jerusalem.

And now we've moved to this global heavenly scale of this stuff, this commotion, that's going on in the heavens that's going to have an effect upon the earth and things like the waves and so on and so forth. People are going to see this and there's going to be great fear among the people. This is talking about during the time of the Tribulation.

And then you'll notice another time frame reference in verse 27. He says *"And then (There's your time frame) they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."* Jesus ends by predicting His return. His physical return to the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation. And that is the time that He fights for Israel against the amassing armies that come to destroy Jerusalem.

And these are incredible prophecies. Are they not? We have so many incredible things that we're looking at here. But it goes beyond just Luke and Matthew and Mark, who also dealt with this discourse. We see many other Biblical passages that speak of the coming, the second coming of Jesus Christ. And many which are in the Old Testament. I want to show you some passages on the screen here. First from Daniel. This is a great passage from chapter 7. Check this out. He says,

Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Daniel prophetically shows us that when Jesus returns, He establishes His throne. And we know that it will be established right there on Mount Zion. And He will literally rule from there. And He will rule over all the nations of the earth. And that begins that period of time we call the Millennial Kingdom. It's a 1,000 year period of unprecedented peace and prosperity on the earth. Because Jesus Christ is ruling and reigning during that time. (Revelation 20:6)

Again, I want to just remind you of the timeframe. The very first... The very next event on God's prophetic calendar, the next one, is the Rapture of the Church. Where Jesus comes for the Church. And that is an event that is preceded by peace and safety. This is not during the Tribulation, or the middle of the Tribulation. That's not a time of peace and safety.

We're told that, when men are saying peace and safety, then Christ will come for the Church. (1 Thessalonians 5:3, 9) The Church will be removed, as Paul talks about in Thessalonians. And then the Tribulation period begins. Seven years of Tribulation, followed by the return of Christ to the earth. Right?

First He comes for the Church in the clouds. Paul says, we will meet Him in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17) Then He comes at the end of the Tribulation to the earth. Where He rules, first conquers the enemies of Israel, and rules, and reigns during the Millennial Kingdom.

Now these things are also spoken about through an incredible prophetic book called Zechariah in your Old Testament. Check this out from chapter 9.

Zechariah 9:14, 16 (ESV)

Then the LORD will appear over them, and his arrows will go forth like lightning; the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. On that day the LORD their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.

Then the LORD will appear over them, (that means over Israel) and his arrows will go forth like lightning and The Lord GOD will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. (Look at this.) On that day the

LORD their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown, they shall shine on his (head.)" Here's a wonderful passage talking about the fact that, the Savior will appear over Israel and save them, at a time that is quite desperate.

And then Zechariah chapter 14 goes like this,

Zechariah 14:3-4 (ESV)

Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives (We even know where Jesus is coming in His second coming.) that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

The cataclysmic events that happen on the earth during the Tribulation and at the coming of Jesus, are going to be incredible with earthquakes that actually split mountains like the Mount of Olives. And there will be a divide between the two. We see in this passage how the Lord is going to fight for the nation of Israel.

And then finally from Zechariah chapter 2. It says,

Zechariah 2:11 (ESV)

And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.

And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.

Another wonderful passage that speaks of the fact, that Jesus will establish His kingdom on the earth during that time of the Millennial Kingdom. And that the nations of the world will stream to Israel to hear from the Lord. And to hear the Word of the Lord. And this is mentioned in many, many prophetic passages.

Verse 28. Let's finish up the chapter here. Verse 28 says, *"Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."* In other words, once they begin they're going to go quickly. They're going to just go rapidly.

And then Jesus ends with a very simple parable. *"²⁹ And he told them a parable: (He says,) "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. (for that matter; He's talking about fruit bearing trees.) ³⁰ As soon (He says,) as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and (you) know the summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, (time reference) you know that the kingdom of God is near."* Very simple illustration.

If you've ever had fruit trees in your yard or watched your neighbor's fruit trees. You know that when you look out the window and you see them just budding all over. Isn't that a cool sight just to see fruit trees, just budding. You know. You look at those buds and what do you do?

You say, oh, summer's around the corner and it won't be long before we're going to see the fruit hanging on those branches. Right. Jesus says, in the very same way, when you begin to see these things happening, you can know beyond a shadow that they will transpire just this way.

Look at verse 32, because this has been confusing to some people. *"Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place."* What generation is He talking about? He's talking about the generation that begins to see the budding of the tree.

He's talking about the generation that sees these events begin. And this is really just a simple way of saying that once these things start to happen, they're going to happen quickly. And the generation that sees them begin to happen is not going to pass from the scene until they're finished.

We know that it's only going to be seven years from the time that these things really go into full steam. It's a short period of time. Jesus is saying this is not going to be a long protracted period of time to see these things to their fruition.

And then I love verse ³³ *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.* Amen! Right? Did you notice what He says here? *Heaven and earth will pass away.* This earth that you're living on, this is going to pass away. The current heaven, it's going to pass away.

The Book of Revelation tells us He's going to create a new one. There's going to be a new heaven, a new earth and He's going to bring them together. He's going to merge them together. Heaven is going to be with earth. Earth is going to be with heaven. Can you imagine what it's going to look like?

Sue and I, for our 40th anniversary, went up last year, went up to Glacier. What an amazing place that is. We hadn't been up there in 30 years maybe or more. And I go up to places like Glacier and I see just how magnificent these places are. And I think to myself, but wait when heaven and earth come together... Just you wait! Right? I mean, just going to be crazy.

How are we to live knowing all these things are going to happen? Verse 34. *"But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

Jesus issues two warnings in these final verses of the chapter. They're watch yourselves and stay awake. Watch yourselves is all about "paying attention, being cautious." That's what the Greek literally means. And what are we to watch ourselves from? Dissipation. We don't use that word. I don't use that word. It's basically just base immorality. He says, watch yourself from the immorality of the culture.

He says, watch yourself from drunkenness. Watch yourself even just from the cares of this life. What are the "cares of this life?" Oh, got to make money, got to pay my bills, got to do this, got to do that. And we get all caught up in this life and the things of this life. And we stop paying attention to the fact that these things are on a timetable and Jesus is coming back.

He's coming for the Church and we stopped actually anticipating His coming. Because, I'm just all caught up in my life. And what's going on in my life and the drama its having drama! Isn't it fun!? I want to put a sign up in front of my house, no drama allowed! No drama. Because it's just, it distracts us, doesn't it?

Jesus is saying, be ready. Be ready. The second... Well, I should say there's two events again that we're talking about here. Remember? We're talking about the Rapture of the Church, and we're talking about the second coming of Jesus.

Now, for Christians, for believers, the idea is be ready for the coming of the Lord to catch away His Church. Be ready! Because that one's going to come without any forewarning. That's the next event on the prophetic calendar and it could happen anytime.

And if you read the New Testament authors, they talk about it could... Like it could happen at any time. Because that's the way God has always wanted us to live our lives. Like it could happen at any time. It's called the, imminent return of Christ. And we have been embracing the imminent return of Christ for about 2,000 years. And that's the way God wants it. He wants us to live in the understanding that this could happen at any time. Because that's how we stay ready. Right?

But the other event that's going on here is the "Second Coming of Jesus" where He returns physically to the earth. Next, Jesus says verse 37, *"But stay awake at all times praying..."* Right? Stay awake. Don't be lulled into a spiritual slumber.

The chapter ends simply by saying that, *"³⁷ ...every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. (Or, if you will, the Mount of Olives.) ³⁸ And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him."*

Let's stand together shall we? Great chapter. Great insights into the end times events. But just remember for the believers in this room, the next event for us is the catching away of the Church. And we pray that we're ready. And of course, the very first thing we have to do, to be ready to be caught away is, to be in the Church, and I'm not talking about this building.

You guys did know that this isn't the church. Right? This is an onion shed that we just happened to paint up, and put mascara on, and it looks nice. People come in and they go, oh, wow! Nice onion shed. Really good. But this is not the Church.

I'm looking at the Church. You are the Church. And you are the Church by virtue of the fact that you have embraced the finished work of Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross. That's why you are a member of the Church. You're not a member of the Church by coming here and signing a document. That won't get you into heaven. I got news for you. You are promised eternal life

when you put your faith in what Jesus did when He paid your price. That is what makes you a Christian. Right?

It's not because you go to church, or read the Bible, or even pray. Those are good things to do. But those don't make you a Christian. God makes you a Christian. God makes you a follower, a disciple, if you will, when you come to Him, and put your faith in the work of the cross.