



"Jesus Proclaims the Future"

Luke 21:5-11

July 5th, 2020

It is time to dig into the Word of the Lord together. We are going to be in Luke Chapter 21. Please join me there. We will be in this section for about a month.

This morning we enter into a fearsome portion of Scripture that is called *The Olivet Discourse*. This teaching comes to us straight from the Messiah, from Jesus Himself. It was given from the Mt. of Olives, just days before His crucifixion.

What we have here is amazing because Jesus was just days away from His death as the Lamb of God. Here with prophetic strength, we are reminded that He is also the Lion of Judah. Christ Jesus is the Lion and the Lamb. The first time Jesus came into this world it was as the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. Brothers and sisters, He is coming back and He is coming back as a lion. He will bring conquest at the time of His Second Coming. It is going to be awesome to see our King, our Lord, as the Lion who will come with the strength of His Kingdom.

In order for us to understand the portion of Scripture that is before us, I need to do my best to supply you with a set of bifocal lenses. Bifocals, they help you see both near and far. Here in Luke Chapter 21, Jesus spoke of some events that were near to His day, just a few decades off. At the same time, mixed into that, He talked about things from His perspective in the First Century that were still in the distant future.

So speaking with certainty, here Christ described the judgment and the calamity that fell upon Jerusalem later in the First Century when the Romans seized and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. At the same time, in this portion of Scripture, Jesus proclaimed hardships and happenings that will increase and intensify throughout this age to signal His Second Coming. What I want for us to understand as we dig in to this is that what we have here in Luke Chapter 21 is the King, is the Messiah, proclaiming the future.

Jesus had the ability to describe things yet to come with the same confidence and the same detail as He could describe things that had already happened. He could declare such things with authority. Hence, the title of this message, *Jesus Proclaims the Future*. The title of this sermon is not *Jesus Predicts the Future*. That is too weak. He proclaimed the future. He declared it. He states with certainty what is to come.

This morning we are going focus our attention on Verses 5 through 11, but now I want for us to read through this entire body of teaching, reading through the majority of this chapter.

I am going to provide some sign posts along the way. Please remember what I just said about the bifocal lenses. I have been digging into and studying this and I am going to read through it, signaling you to the things that I think are speaking of end times and things that have already been fulfilled in the First Century.

This portion of Scripture is not that clean because prophecy always has a dual fulfillment. But I think that there are some things that primarily spoke to things to come, and I think there are some things that primarily spoke to things that already happened.

This is Jesus speaking to us. Let's be attentive. Let's follow along. We will be in Luke Chapter 21, starting with Verse 5. We enter into the temple courts of Jerusalem once again. It is the time of the great Passover Feast.

Jesus had been teaching in the temple and in the temple courts, and he began to interact with His disciples about some comments that they made about the temple. That set Him forth on this awesome body of prophetic teaching. Verse 5:

⁵And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones 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.” ⁷And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”

Starting in Verse 8, I think that Jesus took us into the future:

⁸And 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. ⁹and 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.” ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

Now rewinding, Jesus took us back into the First Century.

¹²But before all this they will lay their 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. ¹³This will be your opportunity to bear witness. ¹⁴Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, ¹⁵for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Still primarily back in the First Century. Verse 20:

²⁰But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹Then 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, ²²for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. ²³Alas 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. ²⁴They 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 times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Now we go to the very end of the age. Verse 25:

²⁵And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Finishing the chapter, we have a pastoral instruction that came from what we have just read.

²⁹And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. ³¹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away. ³⁴But 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. ³⁵For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶But 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.” ³⁷And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. ³⁸And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

Brothers and sisters, here we have *The Olivet Discourse* as recorded for us by our brother in the Lord, Luke. I think that this portion of Scripture qualifies as awesome! We are going to spend the month of July and the first week of August exploring the different things that Jesus said here to all of us.

As we reflect upon these things and as we truly seek to take them to heart, I wonder if any of you have noticed that certain wakeup calls have been issued forth in recent weeks and months here in the United States of America.

Have you heard people saying wake up? Some people have been saying wake up to the fact and to the reality that life in the United States through its history into the present day is different for some ethnic groups than it is for others. Some people are saying to wake up. As for me, my ears are open to that wakeup call.

Also, there are people crying out wakeup people, wakeup America, because the principles and the values and the freedoms that this nation had been established upon, they are being eroded and stripped away before our very eyes. We better wakeup to these things before they are stripped away increasingly and entirely.

When I look at the days that we are living in right now, my ears are very much open to that wakeup call. We need to be paying attention. But brothers and sisters in the Messiah, do you notice that King Jesus has a wakeup call in this portion of Scripture of His own for us all?

Jesus issued forth a wakeup call to His people, not just the people of God who live in the United States, but the people of God who live all across the face of the planet earth. He issued forth a wakeup call that touches not only time, but all of eternity.

From the heart of the Messiah, we have this for us very clearly in Verse 36. He was speaking to His disciples when He said, Stay awake at all times. Stay awake. Stay awake. Be alert. He was seeking to caffeinate us and help us to always remain aware to the fact that there are false teachings and false religions that will infect this planet until the day that His Kingdom comes in power.

Though it is false teachings, they are damaging from the eternal perspective. We need to be awake to the fact that such falsehood can even infect longstanding structures of biblical religion such as the temple. We need to be awake to the fact that there will be those who come with false teaching, who claim to be representing Christ, and to even be Christ.

We need to be alert. We need to be awake. This is what Jesus wants His people to be vigilant to at all times. So through the course of the month ahead, we are going to listen carefully to the voice of the Messiah that we might be awake to the things that He mentioned here in this portion of Scripture.

In this text, I want for us to notice that in order to keep us alert, Jesus spoke of the end of the temple in the First Century. Then He also spoke of signs of the end of the age, things that will intensify as His return draws near.

Following the heart of the Messiah, we want to be tuned in to these realities for our spiritual good and for the good of those who are in our sphere of influence lives as we represent a kingdom that is holy, righteous, and eternal and that has one way in. His name is Jesus.

First, I want for us to notice that to help keep us awake and alert:

1. Jesus declares the end of the temple (21:5-7)

Did you notice this in Verses 5 through 7?

**⁵And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones 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.”
⁷And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”**

We know from looking at the parallel accounts that the disciples of Jesus were among those who had just been calling attention to beauty of the temple. They were there fawning over the temple. They were among those ogling the temple in all of its luxuriant décor.

They were among those who were seeing that very temple that Jesus cleansed earlier that week. They were saying, Wow, would you look at all of this! Jesus did not share in their enthusiasm. Jesus said, It is all coming down. All of it. It is a stunning and awesome thing that Jesus declared.

We must understand that the temple was massive in its scale. When you think of the Jerusalem temple, don't think of the facility here at Bethel Grace, or one of the bigger churches in the area like Cottonwood, where they have a pretty impressive facility. No.

Think about Yankee Stadium. Think about the new Dallas Cowboy Stadium, something that is enormous and state of the art and astonishing to behold. Herod the Great, the father of the Herodian Dynasty, the first of the Herod's, he initiated this massive renovation of the temple.

Herod began it about 25-20 BC. Understand that this temple complex, it was expanded so that it composed about 1/6th of the total area of Jerusalem. It was large enough to accommodate twelve modern day football fields. It was an architectural wonder, that was even regarded by the Romans.

There was a man named Tacitus, an early Roman historian, who said in Latin about the temple, *immensea opulentine, immensely opulent*. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the First Century said, “The gate opening into the temple was completely overlaid with gold, as the whole wall around it. It had above it golden vines from which hung grape clusters as tall as a man; and it had golden doors fifty-five cubits high and sixteen broad.”

A cubit is close to two-feet. The doors, overlaid with gold, were over one-hundred-feet tall. These massive golden clusters of grapes were as tall as a grown man. These clusters were adorning the door. It was lavish.

Then you have most of the people of Jerusalem. Most of the people of Jerusalem were country folk. They were agrarian, yet they came to the temple several times per year in pilgrimage. You can just imagine what a site it was for them to behold. Somebody said that the temple was like a mountain of white marble, decorated with gold. It was gleaming as people approached it.

These people were out in the country, most of them living a humble subsistence lifestyle. They were living in houses made of mud, brick, and thatch roofs. Can you imagine as they were coming close, how breathtaking the temple structure must have been to them.

I wonder if any of them looking at the massive golden grapes thought that one of those grapes, just a single one of those, would get them set up for life, and their family and their future generations. This temple was unbelievable in how lavish it was.

Starting with Herod the Great, who led this massive renovation to the temple, then spreading to the Sadducees and the priests, who ran and operated the temple, then to the Jerusalem Scribes and Pharisees, who have been found its courts teaching, love and thirst for money was dominating their lives. We see this clearly from the teaching of Christ.

Many auxiliary businesses opened in the temple. They were making so much money off of the people who came in pilgrimage. As a result, Jesus came in tossing tables as He was filled with righteous indignation against the abuses that were taking place in the temple. It was an awesome sight to behold.

Jesus came and He was rebuking everything that was taking place in the temple. One commentator by the name of James Edwards said: "Like a once healthy system of cells that has become malignant, the temple had forsaken its intended purpose."

So Jesus came rebuking all of it. Jesus came cleansing it. Jesus came confronting the operations, and the people who were in charge of the temple hardened their hearts against Him. Then they were about to murder Him and there was no turning back. They would not respond to His teaching of the Kingdom or His call to cleanse what was happening in that place.

Now here, Jesus declared the end of the temple. The temple was going to be no more, and that is exactly what happened when the Romans laid siege in AD70 under Emperor Titus. The Romans burned the temple. Then with all the gold that decorated the temple melted into the crevices, so to get it all out, they disassemble it stone by stone.

In Verse 6, Jesus declared the end of the temple.

"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."

There are so many ways that we can talk about what was happening here but what we must understand is that there is something called idolatry of the human heart. There in the leadership of Judaism in Jerusalem, idolatry filled the hearts of the people. There was desire for wealth and opulence to the point that it was even infecting the temple that they were overseeing.

What happens when you try to take somebody's temple away is that they react violently against anybody who tries to take the idol away. That happens everywhere for any idol including alcohol or drugs or gambling or false religions. We attach ourselves to idols and when you try to take those idols away, people react violently to it.

Brothers and sisters, we in Christ need to, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, guard our hearts. In the language of reformer John Calvin, "The human heart is just like an idol factory." There is a sense in which we start to hold on to and value created things above the Creator of all things. The desire for created things starts to dominate our hearts.

Even as followers of Christ with fallenness still lingering within us, there is a daily battle that we face. Will our hearts be controlled by love of the Creator, or will it be controlled by a craving for things in creation that dominates our hearts and minds and our thinking?

We need to be careful against this. Idolatry is built into us as fallen creatures. There is one answer for it. That answer is Jesus Christ. It is the grace of Jesus Christ that cleanses the stain of idolatry within us. It is the presence and grace of Jesus filling our lives that heals us of idolatry, so that we look to Him alone as the One who is of utmost worth in this world.

He is the treasure of great price. Then when Jesus is filling our lives, He helps us to see the things in this world in their proper perspective. We begin to see that the things of this world as things that we can use to glorify God and bless people with, rather than trying to hoard for ourselves and our own selfish purposes.

We need to look at these kinds of texts and say, Lord, we need your grace to wash over us. Here we have a wakeup call telling us that all kinds of impure things can even fill religious practice. We need to be alert, that we might be healthy as those who are walking in the Messiah.

Jesus had just proclaimed something absolutely unthinkable, that the temple in Jerusalem was going to be torn down. For the disciples, this would have been jarring. Continuing, we look through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and we see that they provide for us different details of the teaching of Jesus.

The vast majority their content is exactly the same, but each Gospel writer gave us different details as well. It is just like how some of you are taking notes of this sermon. You might be recording things that I am saying, others are recording different things that I am saying. All of them are true, but the notes might vary from one another.

Hence, that is what we have here. Here is something that Matthew clued us in to. The disciples were ogling the temple. Then they went to the Mt. of Olives. Matthew 24:3:

³As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

In all this, they had the sense of the destruction of the temple. This points us to the end times coming of the Kingdom issues. Hence, all throughout *The Olivet Discourse*, Jesus talked about things that were happening in the First Century with the coming of Rome to take down the temple, and things that would be happening throughout the age of grace that we are living in, and culminating on the day of His return.

When we go into the next portion, what we have in those verses are what Mark calls birth pains, looking forward to the coming of Christ. There are certain things that will be experienced in this world and they are called birth pains.

I have never given birth to a child. I am a man, but I have been beside my wife three times when she was giving birth to children. What happens is that as the time of delivery draws closer and closer, feelings in the stomach and womb begin to get pretty intense. Contractions start and my understanding is that labor pains increase in both frequency and in their intensity as that great moment of birth comes.

That is the whole thing about birth pains. There is an increase in intensity and in frequency all the way up to the big event. So the things that we are going to read next, they are described as birth pains, looking forward to the great appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

These things are experienced throughout this age, but we can expect them to increase and intensify as His coming draws near. Let's see what is next:

2. Jesus declares the end of the age (21:8-11)

a. Cults will arise (8)

What was He alerting us to? False messiahs, who will lead what we call cults. Jesus said in Verse 8:

⁸And 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

Don't be led astray, Jesus said. I remember years ago talking to a young mother in our church. She said that she was at an amusement park with her family when some woman that they did not know casually strolled up. This woman grabbed her three-year-old daughter's by the wrist and tried to walk away with her.

The mother's gut reaction was that it was not a mistake. There was the feeling of terror inside of her as she realized that somebody just tried to kidnap her daughter. Understand, Jesus was speaking to His flock with this kind of vital concern.

There are many people in this world who will lead with strong gifts of leadership. They will be very persuasive and will lead people astray. And Jesus said it would be to the point where people will actually claim to be the Messiah. Some will claim to be Him coming back. This is the warning that Jesus gave.

We need to be alert to these things. We can find lists of hundreds of people that have claimed to be Messiah, Christ. Some of them have been kind of kooky and you wonder how anybody could follow after them. Charles Manson claimed to be Christ. He had a small gathering of people that believed that.

Jim Jones. In my mind I wondered how anybody could follow him. He was crazy and kooky. Does anybody remember Marshall Applewhite who led the Heaven's Gate cult? I saw a picture of him earlier in his life, but later he looked like he totally lost his mind. How about David Koresh founder of the Branch Davidian?

In recent decades there was a man who called himself Yahweh ben Yahweh, the second of Christ. I look at these people and I wonder what people are thinking following them. Smaller gatherings of people have gone after such as these. However, what about people like Reverend Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church in South Korea, who had over a million followers, as he claimed to be Christ on earth.

What about Jose Luis De Jesus Miranda? I remember watching him on 20/20. He was out of Puerto Rico and was flat out claiming to be Christ. His cult was called Growing in Grace. He said there is no such thing as sin anymore. As Christ, he said to do what you want. He said that in the human realm, there might be things that are called crimes, but there are no things called sin. This man had over a hundred-thousand followers. That's crazy!

Now there is man who is kind of rising up in Australia, named A.J. Miller. His girlfriend is Suzanne Luck. They claim to be the reincarnation of Jesus of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene. They are leading people astray on the internet, both in their continent and across the world. It is very sad.

⁸And 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

But this began right after Christ. Bar Kochba claimed to be the Messiah back in the Second Century. But we can expect this kind of thing to increase and intensify through the ages, so the people of Jesus Christ need to be discerning people.

Read your Bibles! Read your Bibles. Know the Word. Study sound doctrine, the time tested historic doctrines of the faith. Know what the Word says, especially warnings like this that false teachers, false prophets, even false messiahs will rise up.

Jesus had more to say. Jesus declared the end of the age and He also warned that:

b. Conflict will increase (9-10)

We see this as we continue. Verse 9:

⁹and 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.” ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

Once again, there are going to be the rise in international conflict. Each conflict does not mean that the Second Coming is right at hand, but we can expect that these things will increase.

Yesterday was the 4th of July and we spent a little bit of time in the city of Lakewood. I did what I do most Independence Days. I found some time in the evening to stop and close my eyes and listen. I think that the fireworks that I could hear were mostly illegal fireworks, like cherry bombs or M-80s, and bottle rockets. Fireworks were just exploding everywhere. It was relentless. I think last night, it was even more intense than in previous years. The volume and the substance of it sounded like a war zone here in Southern California. Kristy said that we now know where everybody spent their stimulus checks—two-thousand-dollars on fireworks!

I was listening to it and taking it all in knowing that they were just fireworks. Imagine if those fireworks were actual hand grenades. Imagine if those were bombs going off. Imagine if those were machine guns. Imagine that those were the sounds of bullets taking people's lives.

That can be terrifying. That can really shake the soul. We here in the United States, we have not seen our soil as a place of warfare like other countries. That happened in the Civil War. But far as our generation goes, some of you will have experienced Pearl Harbor and remember the way that shook you to the core.

Many of you will remember September 11, 2001, and how those planes were flown like bombs by Islamic terrorists into both buildings of the World Trade Center. I remember that day. Inside, I was quaking, asking, Lord, are you coming back? Is it safe to go outside? This is crazy!

So there will be an increase in this kind of international conflict as the day of His return comes near. What did Jesus say? Jesus said that we are not to be afraid in the midst of things like this that takes place. That is the tone and the instruction of this entire body of Scripture.

Jesus was saying to stay alert. Keep your head. Don't be afraid because, church of God, I have marching orders for you. You are to be here as the presence of the Eternal Kingdom that is going to come. You need to be representative. You need to be salt and light. You need to be those keeping your head, pointing people to the cross and to the empty grave and to the soon coming return. You need to be my witnesses.

Brothers and sisters, this requires the Holy Spirit filling our lives. This requires us spending less time doing the things that are of no spiritual profit and more time spent in the presence of the Lord, that His grace might lift up our countenance even in the midst of hard times to be His witnesses.

Finally, to keep us awake and alert, Jesus also spoke about how the:

c. Creation will groan (11)

There will be rumblings across the earth in the physical world. Verse 11:

¹¹There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

We Californians tend to be kind of boastful about earthquakes. Earthquakes, no big deal! Whenever we have family from the east coming, they say, but what if there is an earthquake when we are there. We tell them it is no big deal and that we will all just roll with it—pun intended!

We like to put on that front a little bit. But the fact of the matter is, whenever there is an earthquake, even just a 4 pointer, I'm like is this it?! And I call all the boys in to see if they are okay. It shakes you up!

Jesus said, The ground is going to start shaking. Jesus also said in other places, The earth will stop producing and as a result of this, there is going to be famine and pestilence. People will get sick and we will see that more and more as the day of His return draws near.

He even spoke of terrors and great signs from heaven. I think that He gave us some more detail later on the chapter about how the stars and the moon will be affected. Awesome things will happen when Christ comes back.

In the meantime, He calls us by the power of His Spirit, by His presence, by the power of His grace to be those who walk with poise and in maturity, who keep the main thing, the main thing; who walk as those who are in the midst of craziness and with firestorms going on in the world, we can point to the people around us saying, There is a stream that makes glad the city of God.

It is the presence of God. Jesus is the one hope for this world. When Jesus created the world, He declared in Genesis Chapter 1 that it is good, it is very good. All the things and groaning that we see happening in the world, this was all introduced by human sin. It is going to increase and intensify as judgment draws nigh.

In the midst of this, Jesus has us, calling us to be a city on the hill; calling us to be salt and light; calling us to be those who are marching to the beat of a different drum; calling us to be those who are living with the power and the values of an other worldly kingdom, inviting people to come in to be a part of the Kingdom that will last forever. There is one way in. We mentioned His name earlier. His name is Jesus.

With that, I will close in prayer. I will ask God to fill us with His Spirit. I will ask that the Lord will, by His Spirit, keep us awake and alert to that which needs to be prominent in our hearts and in our lives.

Let's close in a word of prayer.