

Message #102**Luke 21:5-28**

When it comes to the subject of Biblical prophecy, most people live with the idea, well it doesn't matter what you believe about the future; the main thing is a person is saved. Is that the way God sees it? Do you think it matters to God whether we have the right view of the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Second Coming, the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment and the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem? Do you think God has put all of these subjects in His word so people could walk around and say, "Well the main thing is the person is saved and it doesn't really matter how we differ about the future?"

When we come to a text like this, the obvious answer is no. God wants us very knowledgeable and precise in our understanding of Biblical prophecy. In fact, in this very text that point is driven home in six ways that are stated:

Way #1 - Not being precise in prophetic truth can cause one to be mised. **21:8**

If you do not know the word of God, you can be misled in your belief of the future.

Way #2 - Being precise in prophetic truth can cause one to do right things at right times.
21:20-21

There will come a time when God's people literally need to flee Jerusalem.

Way #3 - Being precise in prophetic truth can cause one to look in the right direction and look for the right things. **21:28**

The more accurate you are in your grasp of prophecy, the more you look for the right things.

Way #4 - Being precise in prophetic truth can bring great hope in events both now and future.
21:31

Actually, we expect the world to fall apart.

Way #5 - Being precise in prophetic truth is critical to godliness. **21:34**

Seeing prophetic things taking shape should prompt one to being more godly.

Way #6 - Being precise in prophetic truth is connected to future judgment. **21:36**

All prophetic truth ends with judgment.

Jesus Christ taught much that was prophetic. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said that Jesus Christ gave the foremost place to the right understanding of Biblical prophecy (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 4, p. 257).

Precise knowledge of prophecy can give comfort to the people of God when the whole world is collapsing. Precise knowledge of prophecy can keep you sane when the world is going insane. It can give stability when the whole world has gone mad. It can give godliness, knowing there will be future judgment.

What is interesting about this text in Luke is that Luke is writing for a Gentile audience. Theophilus was some high-ranking Gentile leader. This gospel has a Gentile readership in view. That makes this even more intriguing because what we see here is this:

JESUS CHRIST EXPECTS HIS PEOPLE TO KNOW GOD'S FUTURE PROPHETIC PROGRAM AS IT RELATES TO ISRAEL AND JERUSALEM.

We may specifically conclude that Jesus Christ does not want Gentile believers ignorant of the prophetic program of God. The doctrine of future events is very important in the mind of God.

Now in this context there are at least five key prophetic subjects that are developed:

- (Subject #1)** - The temple in Jerusalem. **21:5**
- (Subject #2)** - The city of Jerusalem. **21:20**
- (Subject #3)** - The times of the Gentiles. **21:24**
- (Subject #4)** - The coming of the Son of Man. **21:27**
- (Subject #5)** - The establishing of the Kingdom. **21:31**

Now all of these subjects are focused on Israel, not the Church. Jesus is in Jerusalem and presenting Himself as King so naturally much has to do with this; but if we remember Luke is putting this together for a Gentile audience, then it becomes imperative that we realize Biblical prophecy as it connects to Israel. Specifically, we learn the fact that God will give a Kingdom to Israel and He will give her the Promised Land.

There are things that have happened under President Trump that definitely have honored Israel and do have prophetic implications:

- 1) December 6, 2017, President Trump made Jerusalem the capital of Israel.
- 2) March 2017, President Trump recognized Israel's sovereignty over Golan Heights.
- 3) November 18, 2019, President Trump declared that settlements for Israel in the land is not a violation of International Law.
- 4) December 11, 2019, President Trump signs executive order against anti-Semitism on college campuses.
- 5) September 2020, President Trump brokered a deal between Israel and Arabs.

These are not coincidental matters and they do have prophetic ramifications.

In this text, Jesus Christ, Himself, discusses the specific signs that will exist before all of this happens. **This is a Jewish context; not a church context.** This is a package of eight specific signs:

SIGN #1 – The temple will be destroyed. 21:5-6

Jesus had just taught about the phony religious leaders and about the value of the widow's offering and some were walking around admiring the Temple building.

The Temple was absolutely spectacular in Christ's day. It was about 500 yards long and 400 yards wide. Josephus claims that the stones and the gold so glistened in the sun that men could not even look at it (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, pp. 554-555). Any who saw this temple would admire it. Jesus said you need to know this place is coming down.

The Temple in Jerusalem was first destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. However, just prior to the time of Christ, Herod completely restored and repaired the Temple. This was a project that took some 46 years to complete (John 2:20).

In AD 70, the Temple was completely destroyed again by the Romans. Titus and his Roman army completely demolished Jerusalem and the Temple, something Christ clearly predicted (Luke 19:41-44).

However, not everything in this prophetic package was fulfilled when Rome destroyed the Temple. In fact, in **verse 7**, when Jesus is asked when will these things happen, Jesus lists a contextual series of events that will lead to His coming.

So the prediction here is that just before Christ returns, the Temple will be destroyed. Many are probably thinking, how can a Temple be destroyed when today it is not even in existence? **The answer is the Temple is going to be rebuilt and it will be rebuilt.**

Right now there are two things preventing it from being rebuilt. 1) One is the idolatrous Muslim Shrine called "The Dome of the Rock" sits on part of the land where the Temple once stood and will stand. This idolatrous shrine cannot be there for the Temple to be rebuilt. 2) Another one of the things that is preventing it from being rebuilt right now is the presence of the Church that is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. There are a number of agencies and organizations that say it is time to rebuild right now.

Certainly one application we may make is that people tend to be really impressed with external religious things. But external religious things eventually will be destroyed. It isn't the external that means the most, it is the internal.

SIGN #2 – Several false Christ's will appear. 21:8

Just prior to the return of Christ, many will come and literally claim to be the Messiah. Many will claim they are the Christ. They will be very deceptive and they will be very successful (Matt. 24:24).

There have been many deceptive religious agents of Satan that we have seen who have led thousands and thousands of people straight to hell. Joseph Smith and his Mormonism; Muhammad and his Muslimism are just two false religious leaders who have conned people into following them.

But this will be a time when there will be those who actually claim they are the Messiah. They will seem to have miraculous power to do things in Jesus' name. They will cast out demons and perform many miracles. But when they get before Christ, He will say, "I never knew you" and He will cast them into hell (Matt. 7:21-23; 24:24).

The critical tip off that they are not true is that they lead people away from the word of God and they are here on earth. When Jesus Christ returns, He will come in the sky.

SIGN #3 – Several wars will occur. **21:9-10**

There is an unrest brewing that could easily break loose in all kinds of wars, including Civil war. This fact exists in spite of the fact that the major cry of the world is for world peace. Actually this cry for peace is a good indicator that this church age is just about over (I Thess. 5:3).

SIGN #4 – Several cosmological signs will appear. **21:11**

In the days just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, there will be all kinds of scary things that will take place over which man will have no control. There will be many "great earthquakes." There will be "various plagues." There will be many "famines." There will be great signs literally from heaven.

There will be strange things with the sun and the moon and strange color configurations in the sky. There will be stars that will fall to the earth. The sky will be split apart and mountains and islands will be moved (Rev. 6:12-15). These things will cause people to be afraid; but they will not cause them to repent (Rev. 6:16-17).

SIGN #5 – Great persecutions against the people of God. **21:12-19**

As we near the coming of the Lord, things for faithful believers will not become more pleasant.

Fact #1 - Believers will be forced to give a public defense of Jesus Christ. **21:12-15**

For the most part we are not forced to testify for Jesus Christ; we do it by choice. Just before Christ returns, believers will be delivered to synagogues and government leaders and forced to testify concerning Jesus Christ.

Jesus specifically says that He, Himself, will give special and specific wisdom when those moments occur. He will give a special, supernatural ability to speak the truth to the point that none of the opponents will be able to resist or refute it.

Fact #2 - Believers will be betrayed by those closest to them. **21:16**

Parents, brothers, relatives and friends will actually hate one committed to Jesus Christ and cause them to be put to death. One believer will be hated by other family members. The hatred will be so severe that some will be put to death.

Fact #3 - Believers will be hated because of Jesus Christ. **21:17**

There will be a fierce hatred for any believer in Jesus Christ. Being a believer in Jesus Christ has never been real popular, but at this point it will be very dangerous. Notice what is stated in **verse 17**, the believer will be hated by “all,” not “some” who are not believers.

Fact #4 - Believers will be divinely protected. **21:18-19**

There will be many who will be executed during the Tribulation (**21:16**), but there will also be many who will survive. Christ promises that many of His people will be divinely protected and will survive the Tribulation.

Now the Tribulation is a time like the world has never seen. What is encouraging about this is God will preserve many during the Tribulation, He will preserve many not in the Tribulation no matter how bad things may appear.

SIGN #6 – Jerusalem will be surrounded by Gentile armies. **21:20-24**

What Jesus predicts here is that many “armies” will surround Jerusalem and this area will become a place from which God’s people need to flee. We know from Ezekiel that Russia will make a move to come against Jerusalem from the north (Ez. 38-39). We know that China will make a move to come against Jerusalem from the east (Rev. 9:14-16). There will be forces that will come against Jerusalem from the south and Arab nations from all sides. When that begins to happen, Jews who have gone back to Jerusalem need to get out of Jerusalem as fast as they can.

God will permit Jerusalem to be dominated by Gentile powers “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Daniel spoke of a final ferocious beast who would bring the times of the Gentiles to its conclusion.

SIGN #7 – Several scary heavenly signs will hit the world. **21:25-26**

Even though God has already unleashed cosmological signs, He will again do it toward the end of the Tribulation. He will do such scary things in the sky and in the oceans that men will be petrified.

SIGN #8 – All will see the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds. **21:27**

The ultimate sign will occur when they all see the “Son of Man coming in a cloud.” That term “Son of Man” is the Daniel term used to describe the fact that the Ancient of Days God/man is coming to take over the world. Men will fear and men will faint. But for God’s people, this scary sight will be a welcomed sight. What means ferocious judgment for the unbeliever, means redemption for the believer.

So as **verse 28** says, “straighten up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near.” Trouble and calamity should always cause God’s people to look up to God.