

Scripture Reading:

Luke 21:5 “5 Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, [Jesus] said, 6 “These things which you see--the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.” 7 So they asked Him, saying, “Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?” 8 And [Jesus] said: “Take heed that you not be deceived.

“Some Questions for Jesus”

As you can see in our text and the passages in the order of worship, this morning we now have the disciples asking Jesus some questions. I have included the text from all three synoptic Gospels so we can see a bit more of the context and all the questions that were asked.

- Obviously, being interested in the “end times” is not just a modern curiosity!

The answers that Jesus provides here in the Gospels and the full picture presented in the Revelation of Jesus that was given to the Apostle John have brought comfort & controversy down through the ages and they certainly have been the focus of much attention in our lifetimes.

- We are approaching the 80th message on the Gospel of Luke, and I could give 80 more on the doctrine of the end times and probably not exhaust the subject.

Rich Lusk touched just on the final two chapters of Revelation and filled our entire first family camp! Our family Bible study of Revelation on Thursdays here in Sacramento is well into its third year! Well, Lord-willing I want to finish Luke and Acts in my lifetime, so we are only going to briefly cover this section and leave the deeper studies of the end times as your homework.

My plan is to cover these questions and our Lord’s answers in three messages.

- This week we will focus on the questions that were asked
- In two weeks we will consider the answers that were given
- And the final message will focus on the proper application of all this for our lives

Last week I left for your homework the 23rd chapter of Matthew’s Gospel *Anyone go over all those woes??* Before we focus on the questions, I want to pick up at the end of these warnings from Jesus, that are fully given in Matthew’s Gospel, so we see the fuller context and all the questions that were asked:

Matthew 23:36 “Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. 37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 38 See! Your house is left to you desolate; 39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”

24: 1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” 3 Now as 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?”

Obviously Matthew gives a much fuller picture than Mark or Luke who deal with the simple question the disciples asked about the Temple.

- We must remember that this is why the Holy Spirit chose to give us four Gospels rather than just 1!

Civil or church courts are required to have two or three witnesses before someone can be convicted... Here we have four!

And just as different witnesses can and do give different accounts of what happened, if they are honest witnesses, in the end you have a fuller picture of what happened.

- Obviously, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are giving us an honest account.

Matthew is addressing a Jewish audience, making the case that Israel has rejected her Messiah and so he gives the full discourse when Jesus tells the woes of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew alone goes on to record the parables of the Ten Virgins and the Talents that were aimed directly at these foolish leaders. Matthew gives the full picture of Jesus leaving the Temple and ascending up on the Mount of Olives. This alone should have brought a chill up the spin of those familiar with the Prophets because Ezekiel gives a similar and stunning picture of God departing the Temple when the time had come for the exile to Babylon...

- Chapter ten of Ezekiel can be your homework this week where you will find Cherubs and clouds and wheels and glory, but in the midst of all these you have the simple picture of the glory of the Lord departing the Temple and He exits out the east gate...
- Where Jesus would have left to go up to the Mount of Olives!

Mark's Gospel is the action Gospel so he includes the departure but not the long discourses and Luke does not mention the departure because he chose to focus on the comparison with the humble widow we considered last week.

- Such is the diversity and power of these three synoptic Gospels!

So in this first of three messages, I want us to consider three things... Because good sermons always have three points!

First we should notice the questions that are asked: With Mark and Luke we see the disciples asking a two part question about the comments that Jesus has made regarding the destruction of the Temple. Their reaction here is much like Peter's on the mount of transfiguration: Seeing Jesus in His glorified state talking with Moses and Elijah, Peter is overwhelmed and he quickly suggests making some tents!

Jesus has been teaching in the Temple for several days and it was a glorious place indeed. Some of those 'stones' were over forty feet high, the construction had taken over forty years and it was a glorious Temple. Jesus again talks of the total destruction of the temple which is difficult for the disciples to imagine:

- So they start pointing out its beauty, as their way of saying, 'are you serious?'

Jesus assures them that He is and this brings the two-part question:

- When will this happen?
- And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?

Now we need to remember that this talk of destroying the Temple and Jerusalem was not new, not something Jesus dropped on them at the last moment... It was something He talked about several times, like His death and resurrection, but the disciples were not yet ready to take it all in. Back in Luke 13, we had Jesus give this response to the Pharisees who warned him about King Herod:

32:"Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' 33 Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 See! Your house is left to you desolate..."

During the triumphal entry into Jerusalem we again see Jesus weeping over this city...

Luke 19:41 "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44 and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

- So it is very important to see what Jesus was focused on and how the questions the disciples are asking relate to this:

IF we do not, there can be much confusion when we look at the answers in two weeks.

- Jesus has told them that the Temple is going to be destroyed and the questions asked in both Mark & Luke relate directly to this event.

You could argue that there is a second question asked about the end of history in Matthew depending on how you define "age" but that will not be our concern as we consider the answers given in Luke.

This leads us to the second important point that I want to have us consider this morning: IF the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple is what Jesus and the questions are focused on, why is this important at this point? We must remember what Luke is presenting to his friend Theophilus in this orderly account:

- Jesus has come to save His people from their sins
- Jesus is going to establish His Church, the Body of Christ which consists of all these Saints.
- Through His Church, Jesus is going to have His Kingdom fill the entire world as they disciple the nations

In Luke's Gospel, we are approaching the climax of the first point:

- Jesus has come to Jerusalem at the appointed time to be THE sacrifice for sin

BUT as we saw last week, the religious leaders who should have welcomed the Messiah are going to reject Him and kill the Son of God

The disciples are about to go through a rough few weeks and they need to begin to understand that all of this is NOT going to frustrate God's plan.

Despite all the opposition from the Jews and the Romans, Jesus is going to establish His Church and His Kingdom is going to fill the earth!

However, there is a price to be paid for those who rebel against God's plan:

- We are told the it would have been better that Judas not be born.
- AND Jesus tells them the nation of Israel, symbolized by Jerusalem and its Temple are to be destroyed.

Both of these facts will be hard for the disciples to understand, and so we see Jesus fully explaining what must happen and giving them important warnings they will need as we will see in two weeks.

And it is this concept of warnings, that I want to be the focus of our third point this morning. As you can see in the texts I have copied in the order of worship this morning, Jesus begins His answers with a simple warning... "Take heed that you not be deceived"

Sadly, this is a warning that has been mostly ignored when it comes to what the Saints have been taught down through the ages about what we call the "end times." Before I explain this, let's make sure we understand what it means to be deceived:

Children, what does it mean to be deceived? Fooling someone... lying to someone... mis-directing someone. Can we think of the greatest example of deception? [hint: Book of Beginnings]

That's right, Satan in the garden of Eden: He took God's own words and twisted them to deceive Eve... Hath God said...? That is not what God REALLY meant, let me tell you the real story! And we know the rest of the story

So, here we have Jesus telling the disciples that the Temple & Jerusalem are going to be destroyed

- The disciples ask when will this happen and what signs should we look for
- Jesus then tells them when it will happen and the right signs to look for so they can avoid danger
- We know from history that Jerusalem and the Temple WERE destroyed in AD 70

We also know from history that the Saints heeded these warnings from Jesus and as far as we know not a single Christian was lost during the destruction of that great city. My job in two weeks will be to show how what Jesus tells the disciples relates to this great event, which should not be difficult since we know what happens... Right?

Sadly, many Christians, including many respected leaders do not see it that way today... Jesus warned the disciples NOT to be deceived because if they had not taken these answers and warnings seriously they would have died when Jerusalem was sacked

- This warning apply to all who have studied these things since that time as well
- So how can we be deceived?

I would argue that ANYONE who takes parts of these simple answers that Jesus gives and tells us that it really was NOT talking about what happened back then, but rather applies to what is going to happen in the future, is using the same ploy that Satan did in the garden by saying, 'Hath God said?'

When we are taught from pulpits or best selling Christian novels that we should look for rumors of wars or earthquakes as signs of the second coming of Jesus, are they not ripping these statements of Jesus out of context and saying... 'While it sure looks like Jesus is saying it applies to the destruction of Jerusalem, God really knows that it is talking about something thousands of years in the future.'

But John, some will object, you are talking about Godly men who have been called to preach the Gospel, surely relating them to Satan is too harsh. Well, Jesus said to Peter, get thee behind me Satan, when he refused to believe what Jesus clearly said... Are these men greater than Peter?

- I think not and it is far past time that many of them were called to account

Now I am not going to pretend that I am going to cover all the issues regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the 2nd Coming of Jesus in these three messages. I am certainly not going to answer all of the questions that can be asked. But I do hope that I can help us to clearly see what is before us here in Luke's Gospel AND help us NOT to be deceived about such things.

Let me close by reminding us that we must allow the Bible to mold our thinking and not bring our thinking to the Bible making it fit what we believe! Over the past couple of hundred years there have been many who have designed very elaborate views of the end times and the 2nd coming of Jesus. They have charts and timelines: With the Schofield Bible they even have a special version of the Scriptures with all the notes to prove their case. Sadly this has become "proof-texting" at its worst, yanking verses out of context and ignoring those who don't fit THEIR plan.

Like the example I gave of using verses here in Luke about wars and earthquakes to judge future events. Or how about making the Anti-christ almost as big a figure in the Book of Revelation as Jesus, when John does not even mention the anti-christ in that book! Again this is what happens when you design your plan and then set out to try and make the Bible fit it...

And sadly, when I come to what the applications are for us today we will see the serious consequences that we are now living with in the Church.

Luke is expounding the view of God's Kingdom that was foretold in all the Old Testament"

- The seed of the woman [Jesus] is going to crush the seed of the serpent [Satan]... Jesus has come to Jerusalem to do just that!
- We see those "dry bones" the prophet saw brought to life when Jesus establishes His Church and the Saints are indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
- And the Scriptures tell us the reach of God's Kingdom where Abraham was to be the father of many nations, David's Son would sit on the throne forever, the stone cut without hands Daniel tells us will grow to be a Kingdom that fills the earth.

The nation of Israel rejected this Messiah and had to be cut off from the Olive Tree and be destroyed... Something foretold all the way back in Deuteronomy chapter 28:

"47 "Because you did not serve Jehovah your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom Jehovah will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. 49 Jehovah will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, 50 a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young. ... 52 They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which Jehovah your God has given you."

Not one stone left upon another, just as Jesus explained!

- The Church-age was not some plan B that God had to come up with when Israel failed Him

Forgiving the sins of His people, adorning His Son's Bride, the Church, and filling the earth with His Son's Kingdom was the Father's plan from before the foundation of the earth!

This is commonly called the post-millennial view where Jesus has established His Kingdom and will bring all of His enemies under His feet before His second coming and the final judgment

Those with the Amillennial view also believe we are in the millennial kingdom now, but they are very pessimistic believing things will get very bad before the return of Jesus

And finally you have the various pre-millennial views that are so dominant in America today...

They believe the Church, God's plan B, will be raptured sometime in the future and that the real Kingdom of Christ begins sometime later in history with Jesus ruling from a literal throne in Jerusalem. As we shall see in a few weeks, which of these you believe will have serious consequences in life... This is why Jesus begins with saying, be not deceived:

If someone says, 'hath God said His Kingdom will fill the earth before the 2nd coming of Jesus?'

Beware, because they likely do not believe what the Bible says... But rather have become overwhelmed with the headlines of the day or set-backs they see in the work of Jesus in His Church throughout history. They will then deceive God's Saints by reminding them that Satan is the god of this world so things must get much worse before Jesus comes back to straighten things out!

And worse still are those who come saying, 'hath God said that all these prophesies would be fulfilled in THAT generation?' Not only will they rip verses out of context, they displace the entire work of the Kingdom by putting it far into the future. In practice they deny that we actually serve the living and reigning Savior today.

I hope this will all become clearer and more familiar as we look at the answers that Jesus gives His disciples and what they mean for our lives today: Remember this is only the first of three messages. There is much more for all of us to learn then I will be able to cover which is why I suggested some homework... For those with Covenant Children, if you don't understand these things, you will not be able to teach your children as you are instructed to do, so in your case the homework is certainly not optional.

AND in all of this we must remember the words with which John opened the Book of Revelation: "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near!"

Communion Meditation:

Proverbs 12:28 "28 In the way of righteousness is life, And in its pathway there is no death."