

Jesus Explains The End of the World Luke 21:7-36

I have been thinking about time all week long. New Year's Day and birthdays always do that.

Time is marching unstopably toward the end--the end of the world, the end of life, the end of days.

As we open to Luke 21 we are opening the door to the future, and peering at the end of the world through the eyes of the Creator Himself, the Judge of all, and the One who will signal the end of days. With the end in sight, what does Jesus say we should be motivated to do? He tells us at the end of His sermon. He warns us that we can get mesmerized by life, hypnotized by time, and forget what we are here to do.

Each Year's Final Day

Have you ever noticed the curious difference about time on New Years Eve? Almost every other day of the year time seems the same. But that night it is brought home to us that time is moving. Usually we use our watch to check our movement. We check our watch to be sure we get here or there at the right time. And it is us we think about moving. But at New Year's Eve we watch as time moves inexorably into another year.

“. . . on New Year's Eve . . . we can almost hear the stream of time beginning to murmur as it drops over the dam of that strange midnight hour. We become aware of the fact that we are not living an endless repetitive cycle, but we are moving on a straight line of time and we can never retrace it.¹

Life and time are so much reflected by how we look at our watch or clock. We check to see how long before something happens, or to check to make sure we are arriving somewhere on time. Often the circle of a clock's face makes us think time repeats itself over and over. We have noon today, noon tomorrow, and noon next week.

We imagine that if we don't get something done it will be okay because we will have another similar time tomorrow. The illusion of time being circular and coming around each day makes us miss the fact that time is going by irretrievably! What we have done, said, and been--is irrevocably done and unchangeably a part of our life. Our steps can't be retraced. Our mistakes can not be undone. We can't add what we have missed, we

¹ Quoted from Ray Steadman's sermon <http://pbc.org/dp/stedman/olivet/oliv10.html>

can't erase what we have done. It is final. Time is linear and unstoppable. We are headed to the end of not only our earthly days, but towards earth's final days.

And that is what Jesus is pointing out to us in Luke 21 where we open in God's Word today.

In Luke 21 we see the end of everyone's life as it was. Time stops. Life ends. Nothing is the same again. Christ's Coming simply reveals what people have been all the time. Paul tells us later that "each man's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

The truly shocking thing about that is that what we are proved to be in that Day, we must continue to be forever! What we have been in the secret places of the heart through life must now be displayed as our true self through eternity.

A Final New Year's Eve

This is what the sudden intervention of Jesus Christ into human affairs seems to be: a final New Year's Eve midnight hour when men will become aware that life has been lived, and it is whatever it is and will never be any different. No one can go back and change it.

That leaves us facing an inevitable question: How long have you lived? "Oh," you say, "I am (so many) years old." No, you cannot answer in those terms.

The only part of life that can be called living is the time you have been watching for your Lord's return in the strength of his abiding life. All else is death.²

Luke 21 is Christ's call to live deliberately, to live purposefully, to plan to live in such a way that it counts for enduring treasure in Heaven. How long have you lived? God measures life differently than we do.

Phil1.21
Jam4.14
Ep5.16
Jn10.10
14.6
17.3

The great missionary to Africa, C. T. Studd, summed up the truth in a little couplet:

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last."

Now let us ask it again: How long have you lived? How much of your life will abide the day of his coming? Whatever is not gold, silver or precious stones, coming from the

² Quoted from Ray Steadman's sermon <http://pbc.org/dp/stedman/olivet/oliv10.html>

activity of his life in you, is nothing more than hay, wood, and stubble. When are you going to start living? You only have today!

Remember what we have already learned from Luke 21:7-36.

Pray

We can learn from Christ's description of the Age (Luke 21:8–19)

The dangers Jesus warned of are what His church has faced from the beginning. There have always been deceiving teachers, persecution, and disasters. But what He says is that each of these areas will increase and intensify as Christ's Coming draws near.

- There will be religious deception (Luke 21:8). "Be not deceived!" is Christ's admonition to us, and we must take it to heart.
- There will also be global distress (Luke 21:9–11). "Be not anxious!" is Christ's admonition to us, and we must take it to heart.
- There will be religious persecution, public (Luke 21:12–15) and personal (Luke 21:16–19). "Be not afraid!" is Christ's admonition to us, and we must take it to heart.

8 And He said: "Take heed that you **not be deceived**. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them.

I will—Know God's Word so I won't be deceived.

John 8:32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Acts 17:11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

9 But when you hear of wars and commotions, **do not be terrified**; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately."

I will—Trust God's Promises so I won't live a fearful life.

2 Timothy 1:12-14 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

I will—Speak for Jesus in any circumstance.

Acts 4:31 *And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

Acts 5:20 *“Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.”*

16 **You will be betrayed** even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death.

I will—Purpose to never quit even when those closest to me fail me.

Mark 13:13 *And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*

“True believers are “are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation” (1 Pet. 1:5). The guarantee of our perseverance is built into the New Covenant promise. God says: “I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me” (Jer. 32:40). Those who do fall away from Christ give conclusive proof that they were never truly believers to begin with (1 John 2:19).³”

17 And **you will be hated** by all for My name's sake.

I will—Expect that life will be hard and full of trials.

2 Timothy 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

18 But not a hair of your head shall be lost.

I will--Trust Jesus with my fears about physical death.

Psalms 23:1 *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.*

19 **By your patience possess your souls.**

I will—Give my emotions into Christ's care and live in the peace He gave to me.

Philippians 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

³ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

We can learn from the Destruction of the Temple (Luke 21:20–24).

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.

I will—Believe God's Word about the future!

We can learn from Christ's description of His Return (Luke 21:25–28).

27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

I will--Trust Christ's Promise that He is coming for me.

John 14:1-3 *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

28 Now when these things begin to happen, **look up** and **lift up** your heads, because your redemption draws near."

I will--Wait for Jesus daily and even more when I realize I am living at the end of the age.

Titus 2:11-13 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*

We can learn what Jesus said were our responsibilities as believers (Luke 21:29–38)

How does Jesus apply this sermon? He gives all believers of all times two commands that we need to heed today--first He said "Know!" and then He said "Watch!" (Luke 21:34–36) Both admonitions apply to believers in every age. "Watch!" does not mean to spend your life looking for signs. It means, "Be awake! Be alert! Don't get caught unprepared!" This is a warning for us today.

Watch comes from two words. The first is the Greek form called an alpha privative *a* which means "not". The second word we get hypnotize from in English, in Greek it is *hupneo*. So when they are put together it is *a-hupneo*. It means to avoid allowing the world around you to lull you to sleep. It is a present active imperative. Jesus says, "I command you to always avoid getting hypnotized by the world".

Mark 13:33 *Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*

Ephesians 6:18 *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

Pray is one of seven different words used for prayer and it means "to earnestly" seek the hand of the Lord in a time of need. Note how Luke uses this word in his two books (15 of the 22 usages are in Luke and Acts). The Greek dictionary defines *deomi*

as "to want, desire, long for, ask, beg, pray, make supplications". Here are Luke's usages:

Luke 5:12 *And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and **implored** Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."*

Luke 8:28 *When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? **I beg You**, do not torment me!"*

Luke 8:38 *Now the man from whom the demons had departed **begged Him** that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying,*

Luke 9:38-40 *Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, "Teacher, I **implore You**, look on my son, for he is my only child. 39 And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. 40 So I **implored** Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not."*

Luke 10:2 *Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore **pray** the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*

Luke 22:32 *But I have **prayed for you**, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."*

Life is so difficult at times, and it becomes easy for us to "get weighted down" v. 34, with the cares of this life and the temptations of the world and the flesh⁴.

All of the magnificent buildings of Solomon, including the Temple are gone. All of the wonderful buildings of Herod are rubble. The Pyramids are crumbling, the Tower of Pisa is leaning . . . nothing on earth ever lasts.

Jesus came to His disciples with an offer of something they could become a part of that never ends.

What are you intensely asking (begging) God to be doing through your life that will last forever?

Christ said here is something anyone in my family can do! Here is what you do that I love, and I make your investments in these areas last forever. Jesus said:

- **I collect all of your prayers - PRAY!** Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb,

⁴ See also Christ's warnings in Luke 12:35-48.

having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. (KJV)

- **I multiply sacrificial gifts - GIVE!** Mark 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. (KJV) **do rest**
- **I count souls you lead to me - WIN!** Daniel 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise. 1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. (KJV) **1st thes 2.19**
- **I remember humble service - SERVE!** Mark 14:3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. (KJV) **do rest**
- **I love missionaries that do outreach - GO!** Matthew 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. (KJV)

To obey Jesus we must “watch and pray”. That is how we can resist the temptations that lure us. Then we will be ready when our Lord returns.

33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

34 “But **take heed** to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

I will--Honor Jesus with my choices I make in this life.

1 Corinthians 10:31 *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 **Watch** therefore, and **pray always** that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

I will--Watch for Jesus all my life! And I will—Learn to Pray for and more.

What are some final lessons?

Things are temporary—build for eternity.

Years ago someone put a poem on the wall of the McAuley Rescue Mission in New York City that captured the disjuncture between profession and practice:

Angels from their realms on high
Look down on us with wondering eye,
That where we are but passing guests,
We build such strong and solid nests;

But where we hope to dwell for aye [ever],
We scarce take heed one stone to lay.⁴

Life is fragile—live for your true home.

Yet St. John of the Cross was right. "God is at home. We are in the far country."
And if we are at home in this world we need to be confronted once again with the
truth about the world.⁵

APPENDIX

Apostasy

Then the Lord put his finger squarely upon another peril to faith,
"And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets
will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold."
Undoubtedly we are approaching, in these words, the end of the age. A gradually
increasing manifestation of evil is indicated as the age nears its end. And what does all
this mean? Is this not a description of that sneering contempt for standards that once
were held just but now are widely forsaken?

"And many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another." This is the
terrible pressure of apostasy. When combined with persecution it represents a powerful
double attack upon a quiet trust in Christ. It is highly disturbing to be left standing
alone; to see, one by one, those who previously were on your side, depart, give in,
succumb to the pressure and leave you unsupported and alone. If they also betray you
in the process, it is almost unbearable. "Demas...has [forsaken] me, [having loved] this
present world," writes the apostle Paul from his cold prison in Rome. Even to such a
doughty spirit as his, that must have been a severe blow. What young person today
does not feel the pressure of the world's sneering contempt for sexual and social
standards that were once held by almost all? How many have thus "fallen way," driven
by the spread of a philosophy of moral relativism that teaches that only the situation can
determine whether a thing is bad or good? And when such folly is openly advocated by
leaders of the church, who can help but feel his faith tremble a bit?

Cynicism

In close connection with this Jesus adds, "And many false prophets will arise and lead
many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold."
Here the peril is cynicism. It is cold and brutal indifference which arises out of the
teaching of "false prophets." Do not read this as though these are religious men,
necessarily. The false Christs the Lord mentioned earlier were unquestionably religious,
but here he uses the term "prophet." It refers to any who speak authoritatively—
philosophers, professors, scientists, statesmen—those leaders of thought who shape and
mold the thinking of common man. What they will teach is the sanctity of self-interest,
the insistence on having "my rights" no matter what happens to the other fellow. The
true prophet insists on the rights of God, but the false prophet upholds only the rights of
man. Jesus predicts that a tragic and inevitable sequence will follow. First, many will be

4 4. Quoted by Joseph Bayly, "Out of My Mind," *Eternity* (Sept., 1981): 57.

5 5. Cf. Watchman Nee, *Love Not the World* (Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1968), 9.

led astray by the false teaching of the leaders of thought; "because [of this], wickedness [will be] multiplied" (the Greek word used here for wickedness is "anomia," lawlessness); and the result of lawlessness is, "most men's love will grow cold." One needs only to read the daily papers to see how true this is. The overthrow of moral limits always destroys the fire and glow of love. The psychologists and philosophers who seek to measure the pulse of our times tell us that the major problem of our age is meaninglessness-the loss of fire in life, the coldness of the human heart. Since men cannot live without fire they replace true love with the false fire of lust, and its inevitable consequence, hate. Watch those who feel they can, with impunity, step over the moral bounds of the past. See how they grow hard and callous and cynical. Life becomes for them an increasing tangle of emptiness.

There seems little reason to doubt that here is the explanation for the rocketing divorce rates of our day and for the rapidly increasing frequency of sex crimes and crimes of violence. Often these are accompanied by moral apathy and callous indifference to cruelty. Only recently the papers reported the cases of two mothers who lost all natural affection. One threw her baby in the path of a truck, and the other left hers on a dump heap. How true these words are: "because wickedness is multiplied...love...grow[s] cold."

Anti-Christian Currents

Here are the clanging gongs that Jesus says will be sound throughout the age, to drown out if they can the still small voice of faith. He warns against the peril of counterfeit faith, of human conflict, of natural calamity, and callous cynicism. These are the sweeping, powerful currents that flow throughout the age, gathering as a vast and resistless flood of deceit; distorting, twisting, deluding, so that men are deceived and misled and the whole race is at last swept along over the brink of destruction into the black and raging waters of the world's last day.

How can anyone resist this? Who is equal to those pressures? Who has the wisdom to distinguish the truth from error in these powerful voices? Who can point out the way of faith when these things are happening?

The Power To Stand

Fortunately for us, Jesus does not stop with this black picture. He goes on to a further unveiling. It is of enormous importance, for it contains the secret power-the power to stand against deceit and delusion and to avoid the fate of being "led astray." It is introduced by that corner word "but."

"But he who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."

Despite the pressures, despite the impossibility of the natural mind's remaining undeceived, despite the subtle siren voices that sound-nevertheless, some will see through the distortions, the perversions of truth, the silken deceptions, and will stand true. Some will endure to the end. These will not and cannot be overthrown. They will be saved. The end referred to here is not the end of the age, for obviously, no one could live through the entire twenty centuries of this intervening age. What Jesus means here is the end of life. These words of Jesus are often distorted to mean that if someone does his best to hang on and live a good clean life, then, if he endures to the end he will be saved. But it is quite the other way around. If he is truly saved, then he will endure to the end and the fact that he endures makes obvious to all that he is saved.

No doubt it is true that there is no use having a good beginning if there is not a strong finish; but it is equally true that there is no possibility of a strong finish unless there has been a good beginning. Only those who have genuinely found Christ will endure to the end. What our Lord is bringing out here is that the strength of character which permits them to stand fast demands an unceasing flow of power, for they are exposed to an unceasing flow of pressure. They can stand only if there is power available that can keep them every single moment of the way. That power is revealed in what these people say. They will not stand, but they will speak as well. "This gospel of the kingdom," Jesus said, "will be preached throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations." The good news they preach reveals the secret of their ability to stand. They tell everywhere the story of One who "has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Colossians 1: 13). Amid the pressures of the age they reveal that they have heard and obeyed the good news, and there stands with them One whose very life is imparted to them and who can keep them against all the deceit of the world in which they live.

It was the Lord himself who said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." No matter how the wolves howl, fangs drip, and opposition mounts on every side, still they will follow him. Why? Because, as he goes on to say, "I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." This is what keeps them and makes them able to stand in the midst of a flood of deceit. They will move against the stream, sometimes in blood and tears and terrible loneliness, but they will not succumb.

The Hour No One Knows

When this good news of "the kingdom of his beloved Son" has been preached as a testimony to all nations, then shall the end of the age begin, said Jesus. That is one unmistakable mark of the approaching end. It is supremely significant that this present generation is the first generation in twenty long centuries of which it may be unreservedly said that the gospel is being preached throughout the whole world to all nations. This is properly a "sign of the times" which marks the near approach of the end. When the sirens of the Last Day begin to moan, and the panicky, jostling crowd tries to get in the door at the last moment, then will be unveiled the deceitfulness of the age. But only those who have learned to walk day by day will be able to endure to the end. In the light of this clear revelation of the character of the age, the exhortation of Jesus takes on new impact. "Watch," he said, "for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." The question he leaves with us is: What is there in your life that is different than another's? Do not prate about outward religious differences. They do not count. They can all too easily be a part of the "broad way that leads to destruction." Have you stood at the narrow way and done business with the One who says truly, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Is his life in you? Has he come to indwell you, to strengthen and keep you every day by a continual impartation of his life through you, in terms of your personality? This alone will make the difference. The test of reality is endurance, and only those who thus stand have every really known him.⁵

⁵ Quoted from Ray Steadman <http://pbc.org/dp/stedman/olivet/oliv02.html>