

Luke 21:20-38

"Look Up, Lift Up, Watch & Pray!"

What's the point of bible prophecy? Why does God tell us what's going to happen ultimately? It's to encourage the believer & impact how we lead our lives (listen) presently. Bible prophecy wasn't given to us so that we could make predictions (mostly inaccurately) but rather they're to bring us into a certain awareness, give us insight personally & impact how we live life practically/presently.

We're in the midst of this section in Luke 21 whereby the disciples had drawn the attention of our Lord to the beauty (& dare I say audacity) of the temple. But Jesus responded to them by saying, "Hey don't place your trust, or set your sights on the things of the earth, it won't last. **The days are going to come when not one of these stones will be left upon the other that won't be thrown down.**" They're all, "Wow, what do you mean? **When will these things be & what will be the sign that they're about to take place?**" W/that Jesus launched into a prophetic utterance that spoke to them not only of what would come to pass *historically* only 40 yrs later but then He hit fast forward on the prophetic time clock telling them (along w/you & me) of how the world as we know would end *ultimately* informing them of His return to rule & reign on the earth. Notice.

Vs 20-24

Now this section of scripture will in reality have a dual fulfillment. Unfortunately what Jesus was speaking of here was but a sneak preview of what still will be fulfilled in the 2nd ½ of the great tribulation just before Jesus returns.

Here He was speaking of what was to come shortly, 70 A.D. when Titus sacked the city & eventually killed in the upwards of 1.1 million Jews and dispersed nearly another 100,000 into slavery or to entertain Rome in feeding them to the lions. It would truly be one of the worst calamities to ever strike the Jewish people.

As bad as that was, as bad as the holocaust was, the worst is yet to come. People say, "It could never happen again" yet the bible declares that it will. Satan hates the Jews (after God used them to give us both the scriptures & our Savior) & he will do everything he possibly can to extinguish them from the face of the earth.

Take your bible & turn in it back to the book of **Zechariah** Ch **14** (Vs1-5). **So though Jesus was speaking of something that was coming quickly realize the destructive dealings w/Jerusalem are not over. However the next time it happens it means the Lord's coming is right around the corner.**

That's why we always get anxious when we see all the Islamic nations begin to take positions around Israel, because it's scripture being fulfilled in front of our eyes & it reminds us of the Lord's soon return. *Because before those things are fulfilled the rapture happens (which we'll touch on later), so the more unstable things get around Israel the closer we are to heading home. Now, we're to pray for the peace of Israel, but nonetheless from a biblical perspective these are exciting times to be alive to say the least.*

So Jesus tells them, "Look, when you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, it's coming down quick. So get out of the city fast, if you're at work, or away don't come back just flee." Of course w/this we could segue/transition easily into the fact that God is able to spare the righteous while reserving the wicked for judgment. *Jesus is warning those who will trust Him, those who believe in Him so that they're not subject to, "the days of vengeance", when all those things that have been written concerning the way God will judge Israel should they not walk in obedience take place.*

Again it's almost a prelude to the rapture, those who trust Jesus being spared while those who rejected Him as their Lord being subject to vengeance & wrath. History records for us that those who believed the words of Jesus & took them literally fled the city when Rome began to put this in motion & they went to a place across the Jordan river to a city named Pella. *We're actually told that no Christians were among those who perished in the fall of Jerusalem. Now, whether history recorded that perfectly I don't know. But my point remains that those who believed in Jesus were spared while those who did not were subject to vengeance.* What did Peter say? He spoke of how the world (being wicked) perished in the flood while Noah, a preacher of righteousness was spared. He spoke of Lot, how he was immersed in the wicked surroundings of Sodom & Gomorrah yet God literally yanked him out & then the people & the city perished. His conclusion? *2 Peter 2:9, "then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,"*

God had warned them of the kinds of things that would come down should they choose to not honor Him &/or follow after foreign gods. He said things like, *"I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste."* Lev 26:33 He said, *"And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you."* Deuteronomy 4:27 Again, *"I will scatter them also among the Gentiles, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them."* Jeremiah 9:16

Now it should be said that it's not the Lord's heart to see people perish, He sends out the warnings, pleads w/people to repent, but if people won't heed they will suffer the rewards of their own ways. That's why Jesus wept over Jerusalem back in Ch 19, He knew the devastation & destruction that was coming upon the city of His love.

He says here that Jerusalem will be trampled *by* Gentiles until the times *of* the Gentiles are fulfilled. Meaning that Jerusalem will experience Gentile domination & occupation until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Which is to say that God is not finished w/Israel; He will fulfill every promise He's ever made to them. But in this interim period God will be dealing with, reaching out *to & through* the Gentiles to the world via the means of His church. Paul said in Rom 11, *"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."*¹ God has ordained a time whereby the fullness of the Gentiles will be brought into full fruition at which point the 70th week of Daniel Ch 9 will begin. At week 69 Messiah was cut off (Christ was crucified) then there is this interim period known as the "Times of the Gentiles". Once the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, God will once again begin His dealings w/Israel which will constitute the final 7 yrs of world history as we know it.

The question here is, "Have we reached that point since Israel is now a nation once again? Are we on prophetic 'overtime' so to speak?" There are those who say that since Israel became a nation again in May of 1948 after nearly 2,000 yrs of dispersion (which is a miracle in & of itself, how many Assyrians or Babylonians have you met? It doesn't happen because after a couple hundred years people are assimilated into other cultures, creeds & peoples) that ended the times of the Gentiles. Others point to the 6 day war in 1967 & say, "That's when Jerusalem was reoccupied under Israeli control, *that's* when the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled." Either of those are plausible, I have however one problem. Jerusalem is not under Israeli control; there is a very special place in Jerusalem where the temple was built, it's called the "Temple Mt". Guess what sits on the temple mount right now? The Dome of the Rock Mosque, guess whose control it's under? Gentiles. Arabs, Islamists have control of that territory. So the single most important piece of real estate in Jerusalem is still being "trampled by Gentiles." So something is going to have to give there & we believe that most likely it will be the antichrist who negotiates that settlement.

¹ The New King James Version. 1982 (Ro 11:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Ok. Are you ready to punch the “prophecy clock” & fast-forward beyond what would happen in Israel eventually up to the point of the end of contemporary human history? It’s interesting to me that sort of “embedded” w/in humanity there seems to be this innate understanding that the world won’t carry on *as is* forever. That one day it will all come to an end; Jesus begins here in Vs 25 to speak into all of that.

Vs 25-28

Of course when we read Vs like Vs 25-26 it gets our minds to thinking about the reported massive solar flares of 2011, the blood red lake that popped up in Texas, the Solar eclipses, the Tsunami in 2004 that killed over 230,000 people in 14 different countries due to the earthquake in the Indian ocean. Or the Tsunami this past year that killed thousands & thousands in Japan, we might think of Hurricane Katrina, the tornadoes in Tuscaloosa or here in Joplin. We think of these things & how they terrify humanity & wonder if they could be the things that Jesus is speaking about here.

The answer to that is, “No”. As horrible as all those things are they don’t even hold a candle to the power of the Sun times 10,000 & thousands of thousands worth of wrath that will be poured out upon the earth during the time that Jesus is speaking of here. To get a better glimpse of what He’s referencing you’d need to read the book of Rev. Specifically Ch’s 6, 8, 9 & 15-18 all of which will culminate in Ch 19 seen here in brief in Vs 27 w/the dramatic & spectacular return of J.C. to the earth w/His church whereby He will rule & reign in righteousness for 1,000 yrs!

Now when you read of *those* things it’s easy to see how men’s hearts will fail them for fear. How nations will reel w/perplexity because there’s no escape as both heaven & earth are shaken, death, destruction & wickedness running rampant & unchecked upon the earth. That’s the way these signs will be effecting those *unprepared* for His coming. Terror, anxiety, uncertainty, the world will be full of chaos & out of control.

But as for the believer (Jesus says in essence), they’re to rest assured that God is *completely* in control & that these things are the prelude to the glorious return of J.C. So far from lowering their head is despair & defeat Jesus says, “Look up, & lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” This isn’t going to go on forever, “I come quickly.”

That’s His word to those who are alive during the Great Tribulation, not to lose heart but to take heart. Your redemption draws near... We were sold into slavery to sin by our parents (Adam & Eve), but J.C. has purchased us back through the shedding of His blood.

He has redeemed us & having gone to prepare a place for us He will come again to receive us to Himself that where He is there we may be also. Now as for you & me, we're not *looking* for signs, we await our Savior, we're *listening* for a sound. "A sound?" A sound. *"For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*² *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*³

Are we talking about the rapture? That's exactly what we're talking about. All the things that we're seeing today are like shadows being cast before the substance of what's to come. The exciting thing for you & me is that before *those* things come to pass (as close as they seem) *this* thing (called the rapture) must come to pass 1st. So even as Jesus said to them I say to you, "Look up, lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

Vs 29-33

I think it's significant that right after Jesus says all these amazing almost unbelievable things that He says, "You can take it to the bank." "Heaven & earth will pass away, but what I'm telling you (My words) will never, by no means pass away."

Now you may or may not know that in the OT the fig tree was used as a symbol or a picture of Israel, because of that many believe that Jesus was pointing to Israel here when He mentions the fig tree. He may've been; however He also points to every other tree on the planet so it could be just a general reference, either way the point remains the same. Certain signs tip you off that certain things are around the corner. When trees begin to leaf & bring forth fruit it means summer is coming. Even so (Jesus says) when you see *these things* happen (what things), the things of Vs 25-26, heaven & earth reeling, cosmic disturbances causing cataclysmic destruction (Rev 6, 8,9, 15-18). When those things are going on the Kingdom of God is just around the corner & will come assuredly, swiftly, & w/rapidity.

He says that the generation that sees those things, will see the 2nd coming of Christ, it will all begin to fall like dominoes picking up speed until it culminates w/the coming of Christ. Now look at Vs 34.

Vs 34-38

² The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Co 15:52). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Th 4:16-17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In Vs 34 Jesus issues a command. The word translated “take heed” is a present active imperative verb meaning to pay attention to yourself or to be addicted to something or to devote thought & effort to a particular end. *Since it’s imperative that means it’s a command (no choice in the matter), since it’s in the present tense that means you should continually be doing this, there’s no end. Active obviously speaks of intentional effort &/or energy being given to the cause.*

What’s the cause? Not what, who. You are; Jesus says be addicted to keeping an eye on your own state of being, where your head is, where your heart is, what’s going on in your life. Why? *Lest your hearts be weighed down w/carousing, drunkenness & the cares this life so that, that Day come upon you unexpectedly. What day? Well, the Day of the Lord, but for our application, the day you’re called to stand before the Lord.*

Carousing, cares, & drunkenness; carousing speaks literally of the effects of too much alcohol, we’d call it a hangover. Drunkenness means what it says (though I think we can apply being drunk on power, or pursuing our careers or any # of things) & the cares of this life (which covers every other distraction under the planet that takes our focus & our attention away from Christ). *These are the things that can hinder us from being prepared for the coming of Christ. Jesus says that His coming will be like a snare, sin will bait you & leave you unprepared to stand in the presence of Christ.* Don’t be weighed down w/worry concerning the things of this life, don’t get lost in the distractions, the traps in this world that will trip you up, partying, always trying to make more money to the sacrifice of time spent serving the Lord, pursuing ungodly relationships. Jesus says, “Pay attention to what’s going on in your life, take inventory & be constantly re-evaluating your priorities.”

Vs 36

Because it will catch people off guard Jesus says to you & me, “watch”. Another imperative verb, “Watch”, again it’s in the present tense & in the active voice, it’s what you & I are to be busy about. Be watchful by staying prayerful, “Pray” Jesus says, “Consistently, repeatedly, that you may be able to *escape* all these things that will come to pass & to stand before the Son of Man.

Question: How can we escape these things (God’s wrath) being poured out upon the earth? We believe that Jesus is making an allusion here to the rapture of the church. He says, “Pray that you make the 1st train out.” *In Christ we don’t have to be subject to the wrath of God, Jesus bore God’s wrath on our behalf. You & I want to find ourselves standing before Him, giving glory to Him when all these things come down. Do me a favor turn to Rev 5:1-10*

Here's the key to understanding who it is who is singing this song, Vs 9, "You were slain & have *redeemed us* to God by Your blood out of every tribe, & tongue & people & nation." *Who is it that's been redeemed by the blood of Christ out of every tribe, tongue, people & nation? The church. You & me, you don't want to miss the 1st train out of this place. You want to be standing before the Son of Man, in the company of the saints giving glory to His name.*

Look up, lift up your heads, watch & pray, your redemption draws near. Praise the Lord? Praise the Lord.

Prayer Points:

Lord God how can we not be stirred once again to reprioritize our lives in the light of Your word to us today? How can we not sense the urgency w/which You compel us concerning Your soon return? Help us not to be weighed down through the cares of this life, not to look down & be depressed, or look around & be distracted, but that we look up & be delivered by the blood of J.C. & the power of Your Spirit. Keep us alert, watchful, prayerful, pursuing You w/all that we are...

You know regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, those who listened to and obeyed Jesus escaped the horrible wrath that came upon the city... There is a far greater destruction that's coming upon this planet, however those who believe in & will listen to Jesus will escape that as well.

Heaven & earth will pass away, every wrong, every present evil, every sickness, every disease it will all pass away. What awaits us is the hope of a new heaven & a new earth where peace, joy, righteousness & love will never end. If God is speaking to your heart & you're willing to turn from your sin & give your heart to J.C. these are the things that await you. *Is life hard as a Christian? Hardest thing you'll ever be up against in this life. But you'll have hope, if you're w/out God you're w/out hope in the world. This life is as close to heaven as you'll ever get, for the believer this life is as close to hell as we'll ever get. Surrender your life to Christ & leave here a new creation.*