

Luke 21:5-11

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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.

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."

10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

11 "And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

It's interesting to me to be preaching on these verses at such a time in world history. We have wars and rumors of wars in the Middle East. Gas prices are going through the roof, a major US city has been destroyed in a flood of biblical proportions, and its people have descended into maelstrom of evil and anarchy that has terrifyingly exposed exactly how fragile our culture really is.

In the midst of this, I have been getting asked the question more often than usual, ***"Do you think this is it? Should we expect the apocalypse to happen any moment? Is Jesus about to come back? Are these the signs?"***

I'm not really surprised when I get those questions, every generation of Christians that has come and gone since the resurrection of Christ has suspected that theirs will be the last, and has looked at the disasters, cataclysms, wars, and so on as sure indications that the end of the age is at hand. There is always a fascination with end times events even amongst non-Christian. I myself started listening to Christian radio as a pagan many years ago, largely because I happened upon a radio preacher talking about

Revelation and I was eager to his take on it and when the world was going to end.

The Apostles too are clearly interested in that question – you can see that from the way that what Jesus said about the temple immediately provoked their interest. They have been marveling at the grandeur of the temple, which was probably the largest building, outside of fortresses, that they had ever seen. It was certainly the grandest, hands down. This you will remember was the second temple (Solomon's temple was utterly destroyed by the Babylonians) it had been massively enhanced and enlarged through a building program started by Herod the Great, and at the time of the Apostles that program still wasn't finished, although Josephus described it's beauty in the following way:

“The exterior of the building wanted nothing that could astound either mind or eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white. Some of the stones in the building were forty-five cubits in length, five in height and six in breadth.”

They remark on it, and Jesus who being divine, knows that the day is coming when the Temple will be cast down, tells them not to marvel too much for this grand and beautiful temple is going to be utterly destroyed. This wasn't the first time that Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple, you'll remember that in speaking with the Samaritan woman in John 4:20 He had answered her statement:

"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

In both John and here in Luke, Jesus doesn't really bring up the end of Temple worship for eschatological reasons so he can teach about the end times, he brings it up for soteriological reasons to point out that the time of the Temple has passed. You see the temple, as grand as it was, was just a sign, a shadow pointing forward to a greater truth. The tabernacle and temple both symbolized God's presence in the midst of his people, and the sacrifices that took place there pointed forward to the once for all sacrifice for sin. Now Jesus has come, you no longer need the sign of God's presence, because He is there. Jesus is IMMANUEL – God with us. He comes to make the once for all sacrifice for sins, that the yearly sacrifices of Passover and Yom Kippur could only foreshadow. And then at his ascension he assures them God the Holy Spirit will dwell in all of his people, so that worship is no longer tied to one building. The signs and symbols of the ceremonial law have passed away.

As grand as the temple was, there is one more infinitely more beautiful and grand, Jesus the Son of God. and united to Him His people are being built into a temple that will never be destroyed.

***Eph. 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,
21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,
22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.***

1 Cor. 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

That is why I can only shake my head in sadness when I hear of plans made by various Jewish groups to rebuild the temple. Why would you light a candle when the Sun of which it is only a dim copy has risen?

But the disciples could not believe that the Temple could be destroyed as Jesus has said it will be, and the world not end with it. The two simply had to go together in their minds. The destruction of the Temple simply had to be part of the Return of Jesus and the End of the World.

So Jesus warns them, you are going to see a lot of terrifying things after my ascension. Wars, commotions, famines, plagues. These things will all happen - ***but the end will not come immediately.***

He has to prepare them, because one of the greatest sicknesses to afflict the church is "***end times madness***". That disease goes all the way back to the apostolic church, Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians largely to deal with that problem. People in the church were saying Jesus had already come back, people had stopped working because this was the end, end time. Paul had to write and say, believe me when the end comes **everyone will know**, this isn't it. But to this day it still goes on. You may know that one of the most popular Christian book of the 1970s apart from the bible was Hal Lindsey's "Late Great Planet Earth" which told us confidently that this was it, and the rapture would occur by 1981 at the very latest. In every age of the church, you have had these date setters, false prophets, and men claiming to be Christ. Men like David Koresh are only the latest in a long line of deceivers.

So Jesus warns them, don't be terrified, many many great and terrible things have to happen first before the second coming. In fact, as they were to find out, the destruction of Jerusalem and temple was an event that comes long before the end of the world and the second coming. Those terrible scenes of

the destruction of Jerusalem were a little judgment that foreshadows the great judgment that is to come. But the destruction had to happen that the world might know that the age of the shadows of the law had passed and the age of the spirit and the temple not made with hands had come.

We will discuss more about the end of this present evil age and the return of Christ, and the things that have to happen first next week. But now let us turn to some applications of these truths.

Applications:

1) DO not fall into the same error as the Disciples regarding grandeur:

Roman Church – example of tourists – awed by the majesty, so many Christians, Sistine Chapel, etc. Cathedrals of deadness. Etc. Symbolism much less important than revelation, Grandeur than HEART RELIGION. 24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

But let it never be forgotten that the material part of a Christian Church is by far the least important part of it. The fairest combinations of marble, and stone and wood, and painted glass, are worthless in God's sight, unless there is truth in the pulpit and grace in the congregation. The dens and caves in which the early Christians used to meet, were probably far more beautiful in the eyes of Christ than the noblest cathedral that was ever reared by man. The temple in which the Lord Jesus delights most, is a broken and contrite heart, renewed by the Holy Spirit. – JC RYLE

2) Don't fall prey to end times madness!: Upheavals, now is the time 19th century. Millerites – disaffection led to the rise of the Jehovah's witnesses. People are scared into the church by now! NOW ! NOW ! talk and fall out the back. Also, don't mistake the end of a nation for the end of the age. America is not the church – Jerome fall of Rome example.

Whatever you do, do not fall prey to these FALSE CHRISTS. A man tells you he is the lamb – he is a deceiver.

Matt. 24:35-36 35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

36 " But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

3) Don't be terrified, Don't be panicked.

You belong to an institution greater and far more lasting than the culture around it.

[example – New Orleans – people without church or family]

You are living stones in that temple made without hands

You know that Jesus is coming back, but you know not when

So what should you be doing?

Kids, lets say your parents gave you a task to do, one that would take some time to get done, and then went away, saying they'd come back later. Would you spend all your time trying to guess when they were going to come back?

Some churches do that.

No! ***What should you do?***

Jesus went away, he didn't tell us when he was coming back, and that for a good reason! But what did he tell us?

Since that time, we have had legions of date setters and deceivers, wars and calamities

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Two different events – 1 little judgment and one final judgment

Roman Catholic "New Temples" – awestruck

There will be no new temples