

Luke 21B

- We jump back into Jesus' most revealing description of the end given to the Disciples
 - The Olivet Discourse
 - We introduced this teaching last week by noting the general outline of the teaching and how Jesus approached the various questions He was asked
 - Specifically, we noticed that the Gospels record three questions
 - Luke records one question
 - When will the Temple be destroyed and what will be the signs of the coming destruction
 - Sounds like two questions, but in the way Jesus answers it, He treats it as a single question
 - The answer He gives weaves the two questions together
 - Matt records the other two questions
 - What are the signs of your coming
 - What are the signs of the end of the age
 - Interestingly, Jesus didn't answer the questions in the order they were asked
 - He chose to answer the questions in a different order
 - Jesus began the discourse last week by answering a question that none of the Disciples thought to ask
 - What will not be signs of the end
 - Then He answered Question #3, which we studied last week
- Today we pick back up by re-reading from verse 12
 - This is the answer to #1

[Luke 21:12](#) ¶ “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake.

[Luke 21:13](#) “It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.

[Luke 21:14](#) “So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;

[Luke 21:15](#) for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

[Luke 21:16](#) “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death,

[Luke 21:17](#) and you will be hated by all because of My name.

[Luke 21:18](#) “Yet not a hair of your head will perish.

[Luke 21:19](#) “By your endurance you will gain your lives.

- We took note that it begins with But Before all these things
 - Moving back in time
 - To events that precede the signs themselves
 - To a personal moment for the disciples themselves
 - Take note of the events Jesus said would befall the Disciples
 - They will be persecuted
 - Dragged into synagogues and prisons
 - Before kings and governors
 - Have you ever wished that God would reveal your future to you?
 - Don’t we all secretly wish God would tell us what He has planned for our entire life?
 - Like Abram
 - He didn’t receive a full picture of all that God had planned for his life
 - He was just told to go to a place I will tell you
 - Or Joseph
 - He wasn’t given any reason to hope when he was thrown in the well or imprisoned by Potipher

- Wouldn't it have been nice to know that God planned to make him one of the most powerful men in the world
- I wonder what the disciples would say to us about the benefits of learning your future
 - How do you think they felt to learn that this was their future
 - I guess to some extent it reassured them in the moment when these events happened to remember that it was part of God's plan
 - But how much harder was it for them to know these things would befall them
 - And yet they still went forward
 - Perhaps we can agree that most of the time it's grace to not know what God has in our future
 - Yet we can still rest in the knowledge that He is bringing us to the end He has determined best suits His plan
- Jesus does give these men a glimpse into how these events will ultimately bring Him glory
 - They will be before kings and governors
 - And they will bring the testimony of Christ to these moments
 - This was a tremendous privilege
 - How could these men ever imagine such an opportunity
 - And when these events actually did happen, wouldn't it have been encouragement to them to see events play out just as He predicted?
 - And then God Himself commands them not to try to prepare
 - Rather He instructs them to depend upon God for the words
 - This is a remarkable instruction
 - But it's interesting because it seems to disagree with advice the Disciples themselves gave others

[1Pet. 3:15](#) but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a **defense** to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

- Peter's instruction would suggest that we are generally expected to be ready with a testimony when we have an opportunity to give account
 - But Jesus wanted the Disciples to be yielding in their moment of crisis
- I believe the difference between these two instructions comes down to the circumstances of the moment
 - In the case of the disciples, the situation was one of persecution
 - And their testimony was one of condemnation against these men
 - They witnessed against these men with the truth even as they put the disciples to death
 - In Peter's letter, he talks about giving an account of the hope that lies within
 - That would imply someone asking about the faith, desiring to know more, to understand what makes a Christian different
 - In those moments, we are to be prepared to witness to what we know
- So why does God desire us to yield entirely to Him in one situation but take responsibility for readiness in another
- Because He has commissioned us with one purpose while reserving the other for Himself
 - The GC of Matt 28 directs us to perform the mission of bringing the Good News to men and to be witnesses to what we have received
 - But elsewhere, God reserves judgment for Himself
 - Vengeance is mine, leave room for the wrath of God, and do not judge

- The purpose of the Apostle's testimony was for the purpose of judging those who would seek to destroy the gospel message
 - And against these men, God would speak judgment through the disciples
- The remainder of these verses reflect further details of the persecutions Jesus knew were coming for these men because of their faith
 - And there is so much we could say tonight about the persecutions of the early church and over the years that followed
 - But I will leave that discussion to another time
 - For now, it's sufficient to note that the early church was both the most persecuted in history
 - And the fastest growing and most resilient in history
 - By contrast, the modern church is in many ways the least tested and consequently the most fragile and spiritually immature
 - Draw your own conclusions
- Finally, verses 18 & 19 offer a moment of reflection
 - We know that Jesus is preparing the disciples for martyrdom
 - So what can He mean that not a hair on their heads would perish
 - Or that they will gain their lives by their endurance
 - Well since we know Jesus was predicting their persecution and death
 - And since we know that in fact the disciples did die, virtually all of them in the midst of this persecution
 - It is self-evident that these statements mean something beyond merely physical life
 - Something beyond a promise that they would avoid death
 - Similarly, could Jesus be implying that these men might be earning their salvation by their perseverance?

- Based on the all the scripture tells us about salvation, we know this too can't be Jesus' meaning
- So where does that leave us?
 - Well, I believe the answer comes in a simple cross reference in Rev
- [Rev. 2:10](#) 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
 - The crown of life is a promise of glory and reward for faithfulness in the face of persecution
 - An eternal reward a believer receives in the kingdom as recognition of their sacrifice in this age
 - And similarly, as we encounter the martyred Apostles in our new life, we will see this crown of glory, and remember their faithfulness in the moment of their testing
 - May we each be found as faithful in our day
- Before we move forward in the chapter, take a moment and look at Matt 24 again
 - Matt's discourse doesn't contain the answer to question 1
 - So after covering question #3, Matt goes immediately into a discussion of question #2

[Matt. 24:10](#) "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.

[Matt. 24:11](#) "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.

[Matt. 24:12](#) "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

[Matt. 24:13](#) "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

[Matt. 24:14](#) "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

- Though some of Jesus' statements sound similar, look at the details
 - Many fall away, betray one another, hate one another
 - Many false prophets arise

- Lawlessness increases and love grows cold
- Gospel is preached to the entire world and then the ends comes
- All these are signs of the end of the age, when Jesus returns
 - This is the beginning of Matthew's answer of what are the signs of Jesus coming
 - So that is why there is so much misunderstanding of this discourse
 - People try to cross compare these two gospels without realizing that Luke includes something that Matt doesn't
 - Yet some of the language is similar
 - Like verse 13 – Jews saved at the end
- Back to Luke...and continuing with question #1

[Luke 21:20](#) ¶ “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

[Luke 21:21](#) “Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;

[Luke 21:22](#) because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

[Luke 21:23](#) “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;

[Luke 21:24](#) and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

- Now Jesus explains the events surrounding the fall of the Temple
 - When they see armies surrounding Jerusalem...
 - AD 66 – Jewish revolt
 - Cestius Gallus from Caesarea sent to put it down
 - Encircled Jerusalem in a siege
 - Before he could breach the walls, he leaves to put down attacks to his supply lines in AD68

- Defeated in a battle along the coast before he could return to Jerusalem
 - In AD 68 Vespasian sent in his place
 - By AD70 breaches the walls
 - Kills 1.1 million jews
 - The break in the fighting gave the believing the Jews a chance to escape
 - These are the days that Jesus described in this part of Luke's Gospel
- Then Jesus adds a fascinating and critically important statement
 - The city of Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled
 - This is a reference to God's judgment against the nation for the their disobedience to the Covenant of Moses
 - And the time Jesus mentions here is a unique period of history when the nation of Israel is placed under God's judgment before the other nations of the earth
 - It began with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians under Nebachanezzer
 - And it continues until the Messianic kingdom is established at Jesus' Second Coming
 - Revelation study for more detail
- Now Luke moves to the final question #2

[Luke 21:25](#) ¶ "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,

[Luke 21:26](#) men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

[Luke 21:27](#) "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory.

[Luke 21:28](#) "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

- There will be signs in the heavens

- Unique signs, unprecedented
- Dismay among the nations (world wide impact)
- Men fainting and fear for come upon the whole world
- Powers of heaven shaken
- Then they will see the Son of Man coming
 - These are the events to cause men to look up for their Lord
- Clearly, these are future events
 - They are the signs for the second coming
 - Different than the signs given for question #3 (end of the age)
 - Proximity
 - The signs for the approaching end are the beginning of birth pangs
 - The signs for the second coming include the tribulation itself and unprecedented events – not confused for other things
 - And they suggest an immediate arrival of Jesus
 - So though we might not know the hour and day of His arrival, neither should a believer living in tribulation be surprised by His return

[Luke 21:29](#) ¶ Then He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; [Luke 21:30](#) as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.

[Luke 21:31](#) “So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.

[Luke 21:32](#) “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

[Luke 21:33](#) “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

- To reinforce what He’s just told them, Jesus uses a parable of a fig tree

- Now as we've taught at an earlier point in this study, a fig tree is a classic picture of the nation of Israel
- So we can begin in interpreting this parable by noting that, just as has been the case throughout the history of scripture,
 - The key to interpreting prophecy and eschatology properly is to remain focus on God's plan for the nation of Israel
 - Israel is the timepiece God uses to reveal His timing for the world
- So when the fig tree puts forth leaves, summer is near
 - Fig trees lose leaves in winter
 - And they cease to produce fruit
 - Appear as if they are dead
 - But the tree isn't truly dead
 - It's just dormant, waiting for its season to return
 - And when the season for producing fruit is approaching, you can tell
 - Because the tree sprouts leaves
 - It begins to show signs of life again and you know that the fruit is right around the corner
- So, when the nation of Israel come back to life
 - It returns from a dormant period when it appeared as if it was dead and gone
 - And it rejoins the national stage, then you have seen the leaves of the tree
 - And just as assuredly you will see the fruit in the near future
 - And when you see these things, know that the kingdom of God is near
 - Doesn't that just send chills up your spine

- We are the privileged ones in all of human history to live at the time of the fig tree sprouting leaves
- We are on the threshold of the return of Christ and the setting up of His kingdom
- Jesus then makes one of His most provocative statements
 - He says that this generation will not pass away until all these things take place
 - This had led to endless speculation about which generation Jesus meant
 - If He had meant the generation that heard his words in the moment – the disciples
 - Then these events have already passed
 - Makes no sense in light of all that Jesus would happen
 - Heavens in turmoil
 - The entire earth fainting with fear, etc.
 - The only other possibility would be the generation to see the events He described
 - Not just the events of Israel becoming a nation, but all the events He just associated with His second coming
 - When He says all things in verse 31, He is referring to the same things He’s been talking about since he began the discussion of the second coming
 - The same “things” as verse 28
 - In other words, the generation that witnesses the beginning of the tribulation will be the same generation to see it’s end
 - This is perfectly in keeping with the 7 year tribulation described by Daniel

[Luke 21:34](#) ¶ “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;

[Luke 21:35](#) for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

[Luke 21:36](#) “But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

- Jesus’ final commands regarding this time are potentially seen as a continuation as His comments on the days surrounding His second Coming
 - But as I read them and in light of all that’s been said before, I think the interpretation is a little different
 - I believe the best interpretation is to see these statements as a concluding statement to all Christians, including the disciples about how to respond to this information
 - How do you respond to a prophecy like this?
 - Can’t change it
 - Can’t change the day of your birth
 - Can’t change your circumstances in history
 - How should a Christian use this information? What does an obedient Christian do in light of what Jesus just taught?
- I believe verses 34-36 are the answer
 - In light of the seriousness of Jesus purpose and of our roll as disciples and of the coming judgment, we should be all the more serious in our purpose during these days
 - Don’t be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness
 - And the worries of this life
 - Otherwise, the end will come as a surprise
 - Death, rapture, the second coming
 - We will find ourselves expected to call to account for what we’ve done in this life and we won’t be prepared
 - We will wish for more time to set our lives straight and get with the program

- Serve the interests of the kingdom rather than ourselves
- Condition 3 Christian
- Pray at all times, desire the strength to escape these and to stand before the Son of Man
 - For the apostles and later disciples, it meant to pray for the strength to escape the judgment coming for the city of Jerusalem
 - For you and I today it is a prayer to escape the collateral events that announce the coming judgment
 - For the saints of the tribulation, it would be a prayer to persevere to the end of tribulation
 - Pick up at the last two verses as part of Chapter 22