

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN: WARNINGS, PROMISES & EXHORTATIONS

Luke 21:1-38

Key Verse: 27, “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Luke chapter 21 has two parts: Jesus first commends a poor widow’s offering; Then Jesus tells of ominous signs on earth and in the heavens that will take place before his return in power and great glory. Why was it important for Jesus’ disciples to know this and to hear Jesus speak of it at this time? What should be their attitude amidst these hardships, challenges and trials? Of course, no one wants to hear of tragedies or deaths. We would much rather hear about blessings and promises of peace and prosperity. However, Jesus did not promise only peace and prosperity to his followers. Jesus foretold of hardships, challenges and even death for his faithful followers. Yet amidst these coming personal tragedies and global disasters, Jesus gave a glorious promise that his followers can look forward to. May we each take Jesus’ warnings, promises and exhortations to heart, so we may not be deceived or dismayed when these things happen. May we all have the perspective that Jesus encourages his followers to have every day.

I. Jesus praises a poor widow’s sacrificial offering (1-4)

Jesus ended the last chapter with a stern rebuke of those who devour widow’s houses. Whatever that means, it is clear that they did not care about widows or try to help them. Rather, they manipulated the scant resources of needy people for their own benefit. This does not please God.

This chapter opens with a stark contrast between the offerings of a poor widow and of rich donors. Look at verses 1-4. “Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, ‘Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.’” It is not a bad thing for rich people to give to God. After all, they were giving something to God at the temple. In fact, they should do so. But here’s the point Jesus was making: it didn’t cost the rich to give when it didn’t really affect their lifestyle. The rich can give more easily out of their abundance since they don’t have any dire needs. They don’t need their offering money as much as the poor widow, since they had so much excess wealth to live on. For example, a \$500 offering sounds like a lot. But it’s not if one has \$50,000 in savings. That would be a 1% offering. The poor widow offered

just two copper coins, which were worth less than two cents, perhaps enough to buy a loaf of bread. But the widow didn't have more money in her purse. She put it all in the offering. Jesus valued her offering more highly than the rich because she gave out of her poverty. She put in all she had to live on. She gave sacrificially. Why would she do that? It expressed her love for God and her trust in God. Though her offering was so small it was 100% of what she had. God doesn't compare money amounts that people donate. God sees the heart. God sees the sacrifice. Jesus was about to give his life, his body and blood, his all on the cross to God for us. This poor widow gave all she had, in the spirit of Christ. Giving in faith and giving sacrificially out of love for God is valuable to God. May God help us to give to God, not out of calculation or to look good before people, but out of faith and love for God and for people.

II. Jesus gives signs, promises & exhortations regarding his second coming (5-38)

Attention then shifted from the offerings in the temple to the temple itself, which was adorned with noble stones. The temple was quite impressive in its time. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote of the temple: "Whatever was not overlaid with gold was purest white."

[What Did Herod's Temple in Jerusalem Look Like? - Biblical Archaeology Society](#)

It took over 46 years to build. But like the offerings of the rich, Jesus was not impressed by the temple. Rather, he foretold its destruction, saying, "...the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down" (6b). It must've been hard for Jesus' listeners to believe that such an awesome structure would be destroyed. But it was destroyed, just as Jesus foretold, 40 years later, in the year 70 A.D. when the Roman general Titus destroyed it. Jesus saw what was to come.

Astonished by Jesus' words, they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" (7). For the rest of this chapter, Jesus gave warnings, promises and exhortations for his followers. Let's look more carefully at each of these warnings, promises and exhortations.

First, warning signs before Jesus' coming again.

Jesus warned of false saviors or messiahs. Look at verse 8. "And he said, 'See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, "I am he!" and, "The time is at hand!" Do not go after them.'" False messiahs have arisen time and again from the time of Jesus up to this day. They claim that they are the one to listen to, follow, and trust in. But they all have led people astray, away from the spirit of Jesus and his teachings. They promise riches, comforts and ease, no worries, and a better way in this troubled world. They deny the message of the cross and the need for repentance and

sanctification. Or, at the other extreme, they promise that if you donate to their cause, you will be safe and secure. Jesus says, "Do not go after them." We must remember Jesus' words, all of them, not just picking the nice words that we like, or twisting them to follow the way of the world.

Jesus also warned of political or national wars. Look at verses 9-10. "And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once...Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." In the past 100 years, there have been two world wars. Many think we are entering a third world war with the conflicts in Ukraine and in the Middle East. We should pray for peace. But we should also pray that amidst these conflicts the gospel of God's kingdom may be proclaimed, which brings true peace.

Again, Jesus warned of natural disasters. Look at verse 11. "There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." Earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, hurricanes, fires, and tornadoes --these disasters are reported daily in the news. And those are just the ones we hear about. Natural disasters will continue to occur until the coming of our Lord Jesus.

Jesus warned of religious persecutions. See verse 12. "But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake." There are extremely religious people who think they are right by persecuting and killing others as a service to God or their religion. Jesus never did that. Jesus never cursed or killed people, even his opponents. Rather, Jesus prayed for them. Deluded religious zealots will continue to oppose God and the truth. They think they are doing right, but they are deceived by their own pride and tradition. This will continue to happen until their eyes are opened or until they die or until Jesus comes again, whichever comes first.

Jesus warned of family persecutions and hatred. Skip to verses 16-17 for a moment. "You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake." It seems unbelievable that even family members will disown and even kill their own family members. Yet this happens today in the world in extreme places where the gospel is severely opposed. The devil really doesn't like the gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached. Why? Because it is the gospel of Jesus Christ which defeats the power of sin, darkness, death and the devil. So it's no wonder that the devil actively and fiercely opposes the preaching of the gospel. The devil wants to make preaching the gospel illegal and punishable by imprisonment, banishment and even death. This opposition

can come even from close relations, like family members. Who are Jesus' family members? They are those who love Jesus, who hold to his words, and obey them. They are those who trust in Jesus even more than their own family members.

In verses 20-24, Jesus warned of Jerusalem's destruction. "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." This all happened in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed. Those followers of Jesus who were in Jerusalem and remembered his teaching, left the city and escaped its destruction. They held to Jesus' teachings and were saved.

Second, promises related to Jesus' coming again. We heard many warnings that Jesus gave his followers to look for before he returns. Now let's look at his promises in these verses.

In verse 15 Jesus said he will give words and wisdom to his faithful witnesses at the right time,, which no adversary can withstand or contradict. In verses 18-19 Jesus promised: "But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives." This does not mean that none of his followers will suffer or be killed. He already said that some will be put to death. Tradition tells us that all the apostles suffered extreme persecutions and all but one were martyred. But Jesus promises "not a hair of your head will perish." Jesus will take all of his faithful ones safely to his heavenly kingdom. He will give grace and strength to endure any trial to those who trust and obey him.

Verse 27 is the key verse and great promise in this chapter: "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." This is the great promise in the Apostles Creed, our confession of faith as Christians: "Jesus ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father. From there he shall come again to judge the living and the dead." Jesus is coming again as the Judge of all those who are living and all those who have died. This is dreadful for those who rejected him. But this is truly good news to those who have loved and trusted him. Verses 25-26 tell us [show the verses on a slide] that people without faith and hope in Jesus will be in distress and perplexed and faint with fear of what is happening in the world. But verse 28 [show on a slide] tells us a different response of believers in Jesus: we can "straighten up" and

“raise our heads” because our redemption is drawing near. Hebrews 9:27-28 repeats this same truth: “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

Jesus then told them a parable (29-31): “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.”

And Jesus gave another promise in verses 32-33: “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” Heaven and earth will pass away. But Jesus’ words will not pass away. We can trust Jesus’ words and hold on to them. Jesus’ words will outlast our lives and the world. Jesus’ words are trustworthy, more than any other self-help books or talk show host advice.

Third, exhortations concerning Jesus’ coming again. So what did Jesus exhort or admonish or encourage his followers to do amidst crazy things that will happen and are happening in the world?

Look back at verses 13-15: “This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.” This is both a promise and an exhortation. Jesus says we will be his witnesses. Here, to witness does not mean to see but to speak or testify. We might be inclined to worry that we won’t know what to say. Jesus tells us not to worry. We are not to worry or meditate on how to answer our accusers. Why not? Because Jesus will give us words and wisdom.

We already read verse 19 but look at it again. “By your endurance you will gain your lives.” Jesus said we must endure. Apostle Paul gave similar encouragement to Timothy: “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:3, NIV 1984). To endure is to persevere through hard times, to bear the pain and difficulty of sufferings. We cannot do this by our own bravado or strength or determination. We remember Peter who caved in to fear on the night of Jesus’ arrest. He could not even testify to Jesus but rather denied even knowing Jesus. Why did Peter fail? He did not depend on God. He did not pray. We must not look at the sufferings or at people or at ourselves. We must look at and remember Jesus and depend on God and his Spirit.

Hebrews 12:1-4 gives us a clue how to overcome and endure: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” We need to remember the faithful saints in history. So it’s good to read their stories and be encouraged. Especially, we must look to Jesus who endured the cross and who endured hostility. This inspires and strengthens us to not grow weary or fainthearted.

Jesus gives us more exhortations in verses 34-36:

“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Jesus says “watch yourselves.” We need to examine our hearts and come to God sincerely with our fears and sins, confessing them and asking God’s help and mercy. We must spur one another toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24, NIV). We must overcome our tendency to try to escape our problems through partying or drinking or drugs or social media binging, or whatever it is as our escape. We must cast all our worries, cares and anxieties upon the Lord, knowing he cares for us (1Pe 5:7).

Jesus says “stay awake at all times, praying...” Does this mean that we can never sleep? Of course not. It means to stay vigilant and on guard spiritually. Don’t let your guard down. Fight a good fight of faith. Apostle Paul wrote to young pastor Timothy: Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called... (1Ti 6:12). The Christian life is not easy or a piece of cake. Paul calls it a “good fight” and “a race.” These are intense images. We must direct our fighting spirit and competitive nature and desire to challenge ourselves toward things of God, pursuing his kingdom and his reward and recognition.

How do we do this practically? Jesus says, “praying.” What should we pray for? Jesus tells us. Jesus says, “praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Jesus mentions two things to pray for: strength to escape all these trials, and strength to stand before Him. We need strength. We are weak. But he is strong. Paul wrote, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Php 4:13).

Today we heard our Lord Jesus give us warnings, promises and admonishments concerning his return in power and glory. Jesus told his followers all this not to shame us but to give us courage and victory. Jesus said: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). Indeed, in this world we will have many troubles. But we can be encouraged because Jesus overcame the world and sin and death and the devil! Jesus won the victory. Jesus is coming again in power and great glory. And Jesus promises to give us strength and wisdom to overcome all the darkness of this world. What we must do is watch ourselves and stay alert, praying, depending on him, and hoping in him. We must not go with the flow of the world, but fight a good fight of faith, keeping the faith. We must fix our eyes on Jesus who is coming again in power and great glory and put our hope in him.

Let's read our key verse once more, verse 27: "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." May we all live with the hope and promise of Jesus' coming in power and great glory in our hearts while we live in this troubled world. May we all stay alert and pray for strength to endure trials and to stand before Him. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.