

Luke 21:5-38 – One Sermon – Eight Lessons

- 1) Everyone seems to think they can predict current events based on Bible Prophecy – but who can you trust?
- 2) Today's lesson is one example - a lengthy prophecy from Jesus about the destruction of the Temple and His return to rule
- 3) To understand it properly we must know why God preserved these prophecies for us, since "all Scripture is ... profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in holy living"
 - a) First, we must remember that "no {Biblical} prophecy comes from the imagination of the prophet" but instead is a product of the Holy Spirit – who sees past, present, and future (Isaiah 41:22-23, 45:21-22; 2 Peter 1:20-21)
 - b) Prophecy is given not to give a timeline in advance but so that **when the events take place** we may know that God is in control – In Ezekiel, over 60 times God gives prophecies and adds, "**then** you will know that I am the LORD"
 - c) Some prophecies describe events that are years or centuries apart as if they are one single event, in part because they involve the same spiritual principles or are two parts of one prophetic theme
 - d) Prophecies must not be interpreted by human logic or reason
 - e) If we value prophecy only because we think it is about to be fulfilled, we may think it has nothing to say to us unless we can show that it is about to be fulfilled
 - f) into current events (which has led to so many false predictions of when Jesus will return) we will miss the lessons God wants us to learn
 - g) We must be familiar with all of prophecy, and allow the Bible to interpret itself; otherwise, if we depend on our own insight, we will be "ever seeing but never perceiving" what God wants us to understand (Isaiah 6:9-10, Matthew 13:14, Mark 7:6, and especially **Luke 8:10**)
 - h) Leviticus 19:26 tells us God considers fortune-telling a sin, so predicting the future is not the main purpose of prophecy
 - i) We need to ask, what would this prophecy be saying to me if I do **not** live at the time of their fulfillment?
 - ii) We do not need to "help prophecies to be fulfilled" – He will fulfill His own words; the question is, will we let His words sink into our hearts and change us from within?
- i) God prophesies in part to prove that He Himself is in control – and that He knows the end from the beginning
 - ii) The prophecies are important for the spiritual lessons they teach, which is why they should be studied in every generation and not just when they are being fulfilled
 - iii) That said, the prophecies do take on a certain urgency as the time nears for their fulfillment – as we will see today
 - 4) 21:5-6 – Today's lesson begins with a contrast between the people (Mark suggest it was the one of the disciples), who "see with their eyes" while Jesus looks at "the things only the eyes of faith can see" (2 Corinthians 4:18): **1st Lesson: We must remember everything of this world will pass away – only the things of God remain** ("seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness" – Matthew 6:33)
 - 5) 21:7: The disciples ask two questions:
 - a) When will the Temple be destroyed?
 - b) What signs will precede it so we may be ready?
 - c) Did it come as a surprise to them, to think the Temple would be destroyed if they expected Jesus to become king?
 - 6) 21:8-19: There is something more important than signs and knowing when things will happen – being steadfast in faith and willing to suffer for Christ
 - a) It will be easy to be deceived – as we see even now, with so many false teachings on the Rapture and Second Coming (see verse 25-26 for one reason why this is so and will get worse)
 - b) In every age, steadfastness in faith – standing on the Truth ("if you continue in My words you are truly My disciples, and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will make you free" John 8:31-32) – is the main purpose of prophecy
 - c) We must love God above all, because Jesus' coming will result in division – "a person's enemies will be the members of his or her own house" and "You must love me more than even your own soul" (Matthew 10:36)
 - d) 21:13-15: **2nd Lesson: God's people trust in God's help:**
 - i) Don't trust in your faithfulness, as it will never be enough
 - ii) Trust instead, and depend upon, God at work in you - the life of faith is not something we manufacture, it is something God causes to develop in us – our part is simply to make ourselves available by silencing the distractions of sin in and around us

- e) 5:18: How can this be, when some will lose their lives? Jesus is saying that not one “widow’s mite’s worth” of God’s promises to you will fail to be fulfilled because ...
- f) 21:19: ... God’s gift in Jesus Christ is eternal life
- g) **3rd Lesson: The importance of endurance** – while God promises to preserve us (John 10:27-30), we are called upon to consciously choose to follow Him
- h) As we follow Him in our daily living – by saying “no” to sin and “yes” to Him in the ordinary temptations and distractions of daily life (Romans 6:12, 14) – we learn how to yield to His Spirit as He guides and protects us
- 7) 5:20-24: These words deal primarily with the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 – fulfilling Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:34-36
 - a) We know this refers to A.D. 70 because of verse 24 – “they will be led away captive among all nations ... until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”
 - b) “The time of the Gentiles” refers to the Church age, which will end as the Church abandons God’s truth, the faithful are Raptured, and Israel once again takes center stage (Romans 11:11-12, 24-25) – as we have seen happening around us now
- 8) 5:25-28: In a way, history will come full circle, as Israel will once more be given a chance to turn to God, but this time, according to Ezekiel 37 (especially verses 11-14 and 36:27), God Himself will give them a heart to receive Him, even as He allowed them when Jesus came the first time to reject Him (Romans 11:25) - Notice especially:
 - a) “Nations will be in distress, anxious over the roaring of the sea and the surging waves” – a Biblical description of the kind of unrest and violence between and amid nations that we see now
 - b) “People will be fainting from fear and expectation” – doesn’t this sound like today? While some use this fear to make money by twisting Scripture concerning the Second Coming, we are to lay aside “timetables and ‘signs’ ” and simply continue to follow Jesus in our daily lives - **4th Lesson: Christians should be recognized by their inner hope and peace while all the world is in fear** (1 Peter 3:15)
 - c) We know these verses apply to the coming Tribulation because it ends with “the Son of Man arriving in a cloud with power and great glory

- d) It’s not unusual for prophecy to begin with one event in history and jump to a future, similar event - see Luke 4:18-19: Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61:1-2, but stops mid-verse because the first half of verse 2 refers to Jesus’ first coming and the rest refers to His second coming (this “day of vengeance”, falls on Israel’s enemies while the “days of vengeance in Luke 21:22 is vengeance on Israel (see Luke 11:51)
- e) 21:28: **5th Lesson: The signs of Jesus’ return bring confusion and anxiety to the world, but hope to believers**
- 9) 21:29-36: Jesus ends with a parable directed to believers in every age (Mark 13:37, Luke 12:41-46)
 - a) 21:29-30: The fig tree is a prophetic symbol of Israel: Its ‘sprouting’ refers to new life entering Israel – demonstrated by her return to her Land (Ezekiel 36-37)
 - b) 21:31: This is the main sign Jesus gives that the day of His coming Kingdom is near (unlike Matthew 24:3-8)
 - c) 21:32 – A reminder that Israel as a nation would not die
 - d) 21:33 presents the **6th Lesson: God’s Word never pass away and never lose their relevance** – His Word, like God Himself – “is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8)
 - i) 21:33: God’s Word is true in every age, therefore ...
 - ii) 21:34: Don’t be distracted by other things (Psalm 90:12)
 - iii) 21:35: The whole world – not just one or two nations – are under God’s control
 - e) 21:36: **The 7th Lesson is a promise: If we stay alert and pray, we will be able to escape the worst of the wrath of God to come, and instead stand triumphant in Christ before His throne** (1 John 2:28, 3:1-3)
 - i) If we “stay alert” and don’t get distracted by the world ...
 - ii) ... God Himself will “present us blameless before the presence of His glory,” our sins having been washed away by the blood of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (Philippians 1:10, 2:15; Colossians 1:22)
- 10) 21:37-38: **Our 8th and final Lesson: Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves** (Romans 2:13 and James 1:22) – or we will be like those who “rose early to hear Him teach” but ended up crying “Crucify! Crucify!” – will we be satisfied with our own goodness and spurn the grace of God, or live in the light of His grace? (See Hebrews 10:26-31)