

*The Destruction of the Temple Foretold**(Mt 24.1—2; Mk 13.1—2)*

⁵ When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

*Signs and Persecutions**(Mt 24.3—14; Mk 13.3—13)*

⁷ They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” ⁸ And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ And, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.

⁹ “When you hear of wars and insurrections do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” ¹⁰ Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹ there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹² “But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³ This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴ So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; ¹⁵ for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your souls.”¹

Have you ever wondered if the end is near? Have you ever read the newspaper and compared it to Matthew or Revelations in the Bible? Did it make you think? In our scripture today the disciples were admiring the temple in Jerusalem. The temple was a beautiful structure, embellished with many costly decorations. The pillars of the porches and of the cloisters were columns of white marble, forty feet high, each made of one single block of stone. Of the ornaments, the most famous was the great vine made of solid gold, each of whose clusters was as tall as a man. The finest description of the Temple as it stood in the time of Jesus is in Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, book 5, section 5. At one point he writes, “The outward face of the Temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men’s minds or their eyes, for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendor, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun’s own rays. But the

¹ *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Lk 21:5-19

Temple appeared to strangers, when they were at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow, for, as to those parts of it that were not gilt, they were exceeding white.” But Jesus was not impressed by buildings, but with the soul. He told them that the day would come when the beautiful Jewish temple would be demolished (Luke 21:5–6).

Jesus left the temple and went to the Mount of Olives, and there Peter, James, and John asked Him three questions: (1) When would the temple be destroyed? (2) What would be the sign of His coming? (3) What would be the sign of the end of the age? (see Mark 13:3–4; Matt. 24:3) The disciples, like other Jews had been taught that these three events would occur at the same time, but Jesus explained things differently. But in order for us to understand Jesus’ answers we need to understand what the disciples believed about “The day of the Lord.”

The Jews regarded time as being in two ages. There was *the present age*, which was altogether bad and evil, incapable of being cured, and fit only for destruction. There was *the age to come*, which was the golden age of God and of Jewish supremacy. But in between the two there would be *the day of the Lord*, which would be a terrible time of cosmic upheaval and destruction, the desperate birth-pangs of the new age.

It would be a day of terror. “Behold the day of the Lord comes, cruel with wrath and fierce anger, to make the earth a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.” (Isaiah 13:9; cp. Joel 2:1, 2; Amos 5:18–20; Zephaniah 1:14–18.) It would come suddenly. “The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2; cp. 2 Peter 3:10.) It would be a day when the world would be shattered. “The stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light. ... Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.” (Isaiah 13:10–13; cp. Joel 2:30, 31; 2 Peter 3:10.)

The day of the Lord was one of the basic conceptions of religious thought in the time of Jesus; everyone knew these terrible pictures.

Jesus stated that the temple would be destroyed first, and then there would be a long period of time before He would return and establish His kingdom on earth (see Luke 19:11–27).

Jesus prophetic sermon was a message given to Jews by a Jew about the future of the Jewish nation. Though there are definite applications to God's people today, the emphasis is on Jerusalem, the Jews, and the temple. "For the Jews require a sign" (1 Cor. 1:22); but the church looks for a Savior (Phil. 3:20–21). The sermon focuses on a period in God's program called "the Tribulation" when God will pour out His wrath on the nations of the world. Many Bible students believe that the Tribulation will begin after the Lord comes in the air and takes His church to heaven (1 Thes. 4:13–5:11). It will climax with the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, at the time He will defeat His foes and establish His kingdom (Rev. 19:1–20:6). Our passage tells about the first half of the Tribulation (Matt. 24:4–14; Mark 13:5–13; Luke 21:8–19).

Jesus gave a description of the Age. The characteristics Jesus stated can be seen in every age of the church, because from the beginning there have been counterfeit messiahs, national and international upheavals, and religious persecution. But these things will increase and intensify as the time of Jesus' coming draws near. Thomas Campbell, British poet and educator, said that "coming events cast their shadows before" and he was right.

There will be religious delusion (Luke 21:8), and even God's people will be in danger of being deceived. There have been counterfeiters for centuries who have led people astray by deceiving their minds and blinding their hearts (2 Cor. 4:1–6; 11:1–4, 13–15). Israel was often seduced into sin by false prophets, and the church has had its share of false teachers (2 Peter 2).

Most people are naturally concerned about the future, especially when world events are threatening; therefore, religious racketeers can prey on them and take advantage of them. In every age, there are those who either claim to be the Christ or claim to know

when He will return. These false prophets often “use” the Scriptures to “prove” the accuracy of their predictions, in spite of the fact that Jesus clearly stated that nobody knows the time of His return (Matt. 24:36–44). I found this article online last night:

Jesus of Suburbia -- Has He Risen Again in Houston, Texas?

By JIM AVILA March 6, 2007

A few weeks ago, in a tattoo parlor in the hip art deco district of Miami Beach, people were lining up to get "666" tattooed on their bodies, and then smiling through their pain. But these are not devil worshipers. They see themselves as devout followers of Jesus Christ. But the major difference that separates them from other Christians around the world is that the Jesus Christ they worship is alive and well -- and living in the suburbs of Houston.

These people belong to a new movement devoted to a man who calls himself the Second Coming of Jesus, and also claims the title of Antichrist, which to him is the next incarnation of Jesus on earth, not an evil being. To show their devotion, some followers ink themselves with "666." One follower said, "I just want to make sure it's visible, that everyone knows my life belongs to the man." Another said, "I want everyone to know I'm one of the antichrists."

They and others like them are fervently devoted, some say fanatically, to a 60-year-old Puerto Rican whose legal name, to his pleasure, is Jose de Jesus, or "Jose of Jesus." He counts followers in more than 30 countries; some say they total more than a million. But where does this man, who claims to be God, live? Not where you might expect: He resides with his wife in a suburban community just outside Houston.

De Jesus' beginning was anything but grand. Born in Puerto Rico, de Jesus grew up poor, living in government housing. He stole for a living to pay for his teenage heroin addiction and admits to eight felony charges that put him behind bars for nine months.

Like many, de Jesus says he was born again in prison. From there he moved to the United States, where he became involved in church youth groups, and eventually a minister in Boston. But it was a vision, de Jesus says, that turned him from man of God to being God.

“Be not deceived!” is Jesus’ admonition, and we must take it to heart. The only sure way to keep our balance in a deceptive world is to know the Scriptures and obey what

God tells us to do (2 Peter 3:17–18). But it is foolish and hurtful to become so obsessed with Bible prophecy that we start to neglect the practical things of the Christian life. Blessed are the balanced!

There will also be international distress (Luke 21:9–11). There are people who have been keeping track of the earthquakes that have occurred in recent years. Others have made lists of all the wars and attempted invasions. I even found an article that predicts that Jesus will return in 2039. But these overlook the fact that Jesus said that wars, earthquakes, pestilences, and famines by themselves are not signs of His soon return. These things have been going on throughout the history of the world. However, during the first half of the Tribulation, these events will multiply and intensify.

Jesus' admonition to His people is, "Don't be terrified!" These things must come to pass; there is nothing anyone can do to prevent them. This does not mean that God's people are submitting to blind fate; no, it means we are yielding to the plan of a loving Father who works all things "after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11).

Finally, there will be religious persecution, both official (Luke 21:12–15) and personal (Luke 21:16–19). Of course, there has been religious persecution ever since Cain killed Abel (Matt. 23:34–36; and see Acts 4:1ff; 5:17ff; 6:9ff; 8:1ff). Jesus promised that His people would suffer (John 15:18–16:4, 32–33), and that promise holds true today (2 Tim. 3:12). But the persecution in the end times will be much more severe and many will give their lives for Christ.

But did you notice the encouragements Jesus gives to all who suffer persecution. To begin with, we must remember that when we are persecuted, we suffer *for His name's sake* (Luke 21:12), and this is a high honor (Acts 5:41). It is not important what people say about our names, but it is important that the name of Christ be glorified.

Second, times of suffering provide opportunities for witness (Luke 21:13–15). The Apostles made good use of the witness stand when they were arrested and taken before the council (Acts 4–5), and Christ's servants and martyrs down through the centuries

have followed their example. The English word *martyr* comes from the Greek word *martus* which means “a witness” (see 1 Peter 3:13–17).

Because of official persecution, God’s witnesses will stand before important people; and when that happens, they must not panic, for God will give them the words to speak. This promise is not an excuse for lazy preachers or Sunday School teachers who do not want to study! No, it is an assurance to faithful witnesses that God will always give them the words they need when they need them.

Not only will the saints endure official persecution from the government, but there will also be opposition from family and friends. Relatives will even follow in the footsteps of Judas and betray their Christian loved ones to be killed. Hatred, arrest, and death will be the lot of many of God’s children during the Tribulation.

But they must not despair, for God is in control. Not a hair on their head can perish apart from His sovereign will (Matt. 10:28–31). Knowing this, they can have endurance and be able to face the challenge with faith and courage.

While many Christians today enjoy freedom from official persecution, or even family opposition, there are others who suffer greatly for their faith, and what Jesus said here is an encouragement to them.

Remember, the things Jesus described here are not signs of His soon return, because they have been going on for centuries. However, as the coming of the Lord draws near, these things will multiply and intensify. No matter what our views may be of the coming of the Lord, we all need to heed His three admonitions: “Don’t be deceived! Don’t be afraid! Don’t worry!”^{2 3}

From this passage we learn certain basic things about Jesus and about the Christian life.

²Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Lk 21:8

³Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:256

(i) Jesus could read the signs of history. Others might be blind to the approaching disaster but he saw the avalanche about to descend. It is only when a person sees things through the eyes of God that they see clearly.

(ii) Jesus was completely honest. “This,” he said to his disciples, “is what you must expect if you choose to follow me.” Jesus believed in men enough to offer them, not an easy way, but a way for heroes.

(iii) Jesus promised that his disciples would never meet their tribulations alone. It is the evidence of history that the great Christians have written over and over again, when their bodies were in torture and when they were awaiting death, of sweet times with Christ. A prison can be like a palace, a scaffold like a throne, the storms of life like summer weather, when Christ is with us.

(iv) Jesus spoke of a safety that overpasses the threats of earth. “Not one hair of your head,” he said, “will be harmed.” The person who walks with Christ may lose their life but they can never lose their soul.⁴

Luke’s passage reads like “**The do’s and don’ts of looking toward history’s end.**” Not all of these apply to you and me. But some have direct relevance to our outlook on life.

(1) *Don’t be deceived* (v. 8). Jesus’ return won’t be a secret. There’s no need for us to set dates.

(2) *Don’t be frightened* (vv. 9–11). Human history will be filled with wars and disasters. How good to know God will look after His own.

(3) *Don’t worry about yourself when persecuted, but witness to your persecutors* (vv. 12–16). After all, the folks in real trouble are the ones who oppress God’s saints! Let the

⁴ Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Gospel of Luke*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. Ed), S. 256

Spirit fill your mouth with words about Jesus and your hearts with love for your enemies.

(4) *Don't give up, even when everyone seems to turn against you (vv. 17–19).* Stand firm on the foundation of your faith in Jesus. Others can hate you. But they can't do you any lasting harm.⁵

Thanks be unto God!

⁵Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Bible Readers Companion*. electronic ed. Wheaton : Victor Books, 1991; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996, S. 672