

Luke 21:1 ¶ And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

Luke 21:2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

Luke 21:3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

Luke 21:4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

The previous chapter ended with a comment concerning how widows were often mistreated. This chapter opens showing a stark contrast with the heart of one of those widows in contrast to the wealthy—among which were the scribes. Jesus saw some people giving to the temple treasury. Some of the people were rich, but He noted one poor widow giving two mites (the smallest Jewish coins). Jesus saw more than just the size of their gifts; He saw through to the heart of the poor widow. Though the rich men had given much larger amounts of money, He noted that they were giving from a position of wealth. She, however, was giving God all she had to give at the time. In other words, their gifts were not sacrificial; hers was.

I thought it was important to note that Luke makes special note that they were giving their gifts—not their tithes. The poor woman so honored God that she was willing to give Him a special gift that amounted to all she had at the time.

Personally, I am not sure that I can prove from scripture that tithing is still a requirement under the New Covenant for the Christian. I do think, however, that God expects us to give willingly to support the spread of the gospel and to serve others in His name. Frankly, if those in the church would give just the tithe of ten percent, far more could be accomplished for the kingdom of God if that tithe is faithfully used according to His will and leading and not man's. My pastor declares that only a small percentage in the church tithe when looking at the amount received relative to the numbers that attend there; most give far less.

I do believe that the principle established in Malachi applies just as surely today as it did when the prophet uttered its truth—you cannot outgive God! In fact, Jesus affirmed this truth in a previous chapter in Luke.

Malachi 3:10 "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

The Apostle Paul states God's will concerning our giving in his letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 9:6–8 “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work....”

God wants our gifts, but He only wants what we want to give Him. Whatever we choose to give from a heart of gratitude and love, He promises will reap accordingly. God does not want us to give grudgingly or of necessity (i.e., tithing because we think we have to). The Spirit also tells us through Paul that we never have to worry about whether or not we can afford to give to God. When He touches our hearts to give, He will always provide for us to be able to do so. The key is always to be acting according to the will of God—not of man or self. In other words, I think giving should always be a matter of prayer.

Luke 21:5 ¶ And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

Luke 21:6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Luke 21:7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign *will there be* when these things shall come to pass?

As a student of prophecy, I always look forward to coming to those portions of scripture that deal with it. When dealing with prophecy, the prophets often do not follow a chronological flow of events. In this section of scripture Jesus is speaking as a prophet of God. See my topical study called “The Olivet Discourse” for a detailed comparison of the accounts of this teaching in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Luke tells us that some around Jesus began observing how beautiful the temple was; in context with the previous chapter Jesus is still talking to His disciples. Jesus responded by declaring that the time will come when the temple will be destroyed to the point that not one stone is left upon another. Looking at those massive stones, they could hardly believe their ears. They asked when this would happen and what sign there would be that it was about to happen.

This prophecy concerning the temple was fulfilled in 70 AD; David Guzik gives a good summary of events.

“It is said that at the fall of Jerusalem, the last surviving Jews of the city fled to the temple, because it was the strongest, most secure building in the city. Roman soldiers surrounded it, and one drunken soldier started a fire that soon engulfed the whole building. Ornate gold detail work in the roof melted down in the cracks between the stone walls of the temple, and to retrieve the gold, the Roman commander ordered that the temple be dismantled stone by stone. The destruction was so complete that today, they have true difficulty learning exactly where the temple was.”

As Paul so aptly noted, the Jews are always seeking a sign.

1 Corinthians 1:22 "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom...."

Luke 21:8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

Jesus begins to respond with a broader perspective than indicated by the previous verse. In the other two accounts, we are told that Jesus was also questioned about when He would return at the end of the world as we now know it. Verse 9 hints at and verse 27 affirms that connection to the other gospel accounts.

Jesus warns His disciples not to be deceived when many others come on the scene claiming to be the Messiah and that the end is near. Just expect it and don't follow after these liars. Matthew specifically states that these false Christs will be very convincing because they will do signs and wonders (much like Pharaoh's magicians did).

Matthew 24:24 "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Luke 21:9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

Luke 21:10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

Jesus goes on to say that wars and commotions between/among peoples and nations will become so prevalent as to provoke fear. Although the times will seem quite dangerous, Jesus declares that these wars and commotions are to be expected. In fact, nations or ethnic groups of people will fight with one another as well as kingdoms, "peoples united under a common ruler/authority," fighting other kingdoms.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Jewish Christian scholar, declares the statement "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" to be in reference to world war. He states:

"This expression, found in Jewish sources such as the Bereshit Rabbah (written shortly after Yeshua's time) and, later, the Zohar Chadash—is a Hebrew idiom for a world war. What Jesus was saying, then, is that it would be a world war rather than merely a local war that would mark the beginning of the end of the age."

Regarding World Wars I and II he said: "Both wars had a decisive impact on Jewish history. The first gave impetus to the growth of the Zionist movement, and the Second World War led to the re-establishment of the Jewish State."

Jesus is saying that though these are signs of what is to come, the end is yet to come.

Luke 21:11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

Jesus goes on to prophesy that great earthquakes, famines and pestilences will occur in many places. Matthew's account tells us that Jesus compared these events to labor pains that precede the birth of the child. In other words, they will happen more frequently and with more intensity as the time draws near.

It's interesting to note how these verses compare to seals 1-4 in chapter six of Revelation; this emphasizes that these signs will find culmination in the judgment to come.

*Revelation 6:1–8 “And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. (Satan, or the Antichrist, the ultimate False Christ) And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and **that they should kill one another**: and there was given unto him a great sword. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. (represents famine) And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, **to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.**”*

Jesus also tells His disciples to expect fearful sights and great signs from heaven. Obviously, one can't help but think of the UFO phenomena and how Satan might be at work in those situations, but who knows what else might be on the horizon. I am also reminded of the apparitions of Mary that so many embrace as coming from God, but I believe they are another trick in Satan's arsenal. Remember, scripture affirms that Satan can transform himself to appear as an angel of light, and his ministers sometimes appear as the same.

2 Corinthians 11:14–15 “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

Luke 21:12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

Luke 21:13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Luke 21:14 Settle *it* therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

Luke 21:15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

Jesus now warns His disciples that they will be persecuted by their own people and imprisoned and prosecuted because of their allegiance to Him. Not only will they face persecution and prosecution from their own people, they will also face the same before the kings and rulers of other nations. These events will be allowed for a reason—as an opportunity to testify of God. Jesus then gives them a remarkable word of comfort and encouragement. He tells them not to worry about how they will answer their prosecutors because “I will give you a mouth and wisdom” to answer them in a way they cannot refute. Jesus is declaring that He will put the words in their mouth as needed. Though they did not seem to process everything He was saying to them at the time, the Holy Spirit will remind them of this truth after the resurrection when God removes the blinders to their spiritual understanding. The only way Jesus could be with each one of them is in the person of the Holy Spirit, and they would come to understand that more fully at Pentecost (see Acts 2).

Luke 21:16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and *some* of you shall they cause to be put to death.

Luke 21:17 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake.

These verses are some of the saddest verses describing the times that will lead to the return of Jesus as King. Followers of Jesus can expect to be betrayed by parents, siblings, kinfolk, and friends—some even to the point to death. In fact, true followers of Jesus will generally be hated by all others.

One would like to think that you could always count on the support of family, but the reality is that you can’t. The family as established by God is becoming a relic of the past and the bonds that bind becoming weaker and weaker. Divorce is widespread, respect for life is continuing a downward spiral, abortion is rampant, cultural morals are rapidly being replaced by wicked practices, etc. Tolerance is the word that is preached by all toward others except towards those of us who hold fast to the truth of the word of God. I truly never thought the day would come that I would see immorality embraced as acceptable nor could I imagine that Christians could be persecuted in America. I no longer doubt that it could happen; I am expecting it to happen. I pray that the Lord takes us home before that time. If, however, He chooses to allow it to happen before then, I pray that He will strengthen me and those I love that love Him to glorify Him through our testimony.

These verses also bring to mind the fifth seal in Revelation 6: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held...”

Luke 21:18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

Luke 21:19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

Jesus goes on to declare that in spite of the fact that some will be killed as martyrs for their faith in Him, not one hair of their heads will perish. In other words, you will be resurrected to new life with every hair intact. In light of the truth of the resurrection to eternal life, Jesus encourages His disciples to be patient and not let the circumstances defeat them. Patience and endurance will actually give evidence that one is saved and is part of God's family. John declares this truth in his first letter.

1 John 2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Luke 21:20 ¶ And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

Luke 21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

Luke 21:22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Luke 21:23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

Luke 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

At this point I believe the prophecy of Jesus focuses in on the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the legions of Titus that also foreshadows the future destruction that will come through the armies of Antichrist right before the Lord returns to set up His earthly kingdom.

When they see Jerusalem surrounded by enemy forces, they should understand that destruction is soon to follow. Those who are in Judea should flee to the mountains and those in the city proper should flee the city. He also warns those considering coming to Jerusalem from other countries to stay away.

I am reminded that scripture is clear that vengeance is God's prerogative and is reserved for God's enemies.

Deuteronomy 32:35 "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence;"

Romans 12:19 "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

I believe the vengeance spoken of by Luke is a reference to the declaration of Jesus in Matthew 23:34-36: *"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may*

come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

The Lord notes that it will be really hard times for expectant and nursing mothers at that time. Many will be killed and many will be led captive into all the nations. This is the reason I believe this section is specific to the events of 70 AD. It was after the victory of the Roman legions that the Jews were dispersed throughout the Gentile nations. Jesus then declares that Jerusalem will continue to be "under foot" of the Gentiles until Jesus establishes His kingdom.

Luke 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Luke 21:26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

Luke 21:27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

At first it would seem that the Lord is repeating Himself in reference to signs in the sun, moon and stars; but as I looked back at verse 11, the emphasis seemed to be on fearful signs and sights in the heavens. Maybe this reference to signs in the sun, moon and stars is a reference to more science related phenomena. Though not readily clear from the KJV translation, other translations clarify that the following statement regarding the anxiety and perplexity of people on earth is directly connected to the actions of the sea. As I look at the context and the flow of information, it seems that the fearful sights and wonders from heaven are connected to the time signified by the labor pains, while the events in these verses are directly connected to the return of the Lord according to verse 27. In that regard, I can't help but think of the prophecy of John as recorded in Revelation.

Revelation 16:3-18 "And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire....And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.... And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done....And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great."

Especially noted is the fact that events occurring on planet earth are causing great fear; it will seem that the very stability of the stars and planets is at risk.

It is at the time of greatest fear that the Son of man will be seen coming in the clouds in power and great glory. Again, John confirms His glorious coming in Revelation.

Revelation 19:11–14 “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”

Luke 21:28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

After describing His glorious return to establish His kingdom, the Lord declares that these signs are meant to be understood and provide encouragement to those looking for His return. When they begin to come to pass, we are to start looking up with expectation for His return and the completion of the first resurrection, the resurrection of the redeemed.

*Revelation 20:4–6 “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.** Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

Luke 21:29 ¶ And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

Luke 21:30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

Luke 21:31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

Luke 21:32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

At this point the Lord emphasizes that the signs are to be recognized just as surely as the budding trees are harbingers of summer soon to arrive. This generation, the one that sees the signs just revealed, will not pass until all is fulfilled—in other words, until the Lord returns to establish His kingdom.

I think so many wonderful teachers read way too much into this passage by equating Israel to the fig tree and comparing the birth of the nation to the budding of the tree. Luke is clear in stating that the fig tree is just one of many trees. Although I believe the rebirth of the nation of Israel is a key prophetic event that is foundational to the fulfillment of prophecy, I do not believe that is the point Jesus is making in these verses. Some of the signs Jesus was referencing are connected to events occurring in the 70th week of Daniel, the last seven years commonly known as the tribulation, that precede the return of Jesus. That generation will surely not pass without seeing fulfillment. Maybe the

importance of this verse is directed more to those who are saved during the tribulation and will be trying to hang on to their faith in such terrible times. Matthew records that it will be the worst time man has ever experienced on planet earth.

Matthew 24:21 "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Luke 21:33 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

This verse seems to contradict other verses in scripture.

Ephesians 3:21 "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

When you look at the Greek for the word "world," it makes reference to perpetuity and the Messianic period. Other verses confirm that the earth will perish, but Peter helps illuminate our understanding.

2 Peter 3:12-13 "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

The word "new" in the last verse from Peter quoted above states, "new (especially in freshness). I think that because of the decay and wasting away of the heavens and earth caused by the curse of sin, God will destroy the old one by fire and create a new one from its ashes. (At least, that is how I rectify these ideas.) Maybe this will be comparable to creation as recorded in Genesis after the time of Satan's fall and the creation of earth for mankind. (See notes on Genesis 1.)

There is a verse in Colossians that tells us that God is the glue that holds everything together.

Colossians 1:17 "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Maybe this is a reference to His letting go for a moment only to speak the word to bring it back together as a "new" creation.

In contrast to the creation as we know it decaying and perishing and needing to be renewed, the word of God will never pass away. Its truth will stand for all eternity.

Luke 21:34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

Luke 21:35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Luke 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Jesus closes this teaching with an admonition to His disciples (my paraphrase)—Be careful to guard your hearts and act soberly and wisely so that you are not caught unaware when the time comes. What I have told you will happen is certain and will trap everyone dwelling on the face of the earth at that time.

The final words of warning—Keep watch and keep praying. Expectant vigilance in watching for the signs of the Lord’s return and prayer are two evidences of one in right relationship with God. Only those in right relationship with God can expect to escape all these dreadful events and stand in worship and honor before the Son of man, the Son of God. The only way to get in right relationship with God is to accept the gift of salvation offered through His Son, Jesus the Christ.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Ephesians 2:8–9 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Luke 21:37 And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called *the mount* of Olives.

Luke 21:38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

This chapter ends with a statement of how Jesus spent His last days on earth—teaching in the temple during the day and abiding somewhere on the Mount of Olives at night. Until the very last, the people continued to come early in the morning to the temple to hear Him teach.