

## Luke Study 14 - The Last Things Lk 21:5-38

### Introduction

In 19:45-21:4, Jesus declared that Israel's religion, tainted as it was by vested human interests, was corrupt. In 21:5-38, he says that the temple - which now represents that corruption - will be destroyed. But this won't be the last thing God will do. As bad as the temple's destruction will be, it will be just a foretaste of the punishment God will one day bring on all the world for rejecting him. The end is coming. So what are the disciples to do while they wait? They are to watch for that day, and pray they will be ready for it when it comes.

And we're to do the same. What must we do while we wait for the end? We're to watch, pray, and be ready.

### Read 21:5-7

1. What does Jesus say about the temple?
2. What do the disciples want to know about this?

Jesus tells the disciples that, as magnificent as the temple is, one day it will be destroyed. The disciples want to know when this will be, and what the signs will be that it's about to happen.

### Read 21:8-11

3. What three things does Jesus say will *not* be signs the end is about to happen?
  - 21:8
  - 21:9-10
  - 21:11
4. How do we see all of these things happening now, just as a normal part of life?

Jesus says that some things are *not* signs the end is about to come. They are just normal parts of life in a fallen world. People will make false claims about Jesus, wars will break out, and natural disasters will happen *all the time* until Jesus returns, and so none of them will give us any clue about when it will happen.

But this doesn't mean there won't be identifiable stages in the lead up to the end of the world. The first that Jesus mentions, which will happen very soon for the disciples, is persecution.

**Read 21:12-19**

5. What does Jesus say will happen to the disciples?
6. What will this give them an opportunity to do?
7. How will God protect them through it?
8. Bearing in mind these predictions are made specifically about Jesus' first disciples, the Bible speaks about how to cope with persecution generally (e.g. 1 Peter 3:13-17). How should Christians respond when they are attacked for their faith?

Jesus promises that, in the near future ('before all this,' i.e. before even all these normal parts of life - people making false claims about Jesus, wars, natural disasters - have had a chance to happen), the disciples will be persecuted. They will be taken before both secular and religious courts and tried for their faith. But this will give them a chance to tell their persecutors about Jesus. And they shouldn't worry beforehand about what to say: Jesus will give them the words on the spot. And though some of them will die, none of them will be lost in the eternal sense (22:18). If they stand firm, they will win life. This promise is true for Christians in all ages (e.g. 1 Peter 3:13-17).

But after the persecution of Jesus' first followers, something else will happen as part of God's judgment on the world.

**Read 21:20-24**

9. What will happen to Jerusalem?
10. Why? (See 13:34-35; 19:41-44.)
11. What should people living in or near Jerusalem do at this time?
12. What this event represents will keep going 'until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled' (v.24). What do you think this means? (See Mark 13:10; Romans 11:25)

In AD66, there was a Jewish revolution against Rome, which led to Rome besieging Jerusalem and eventually destroying it in AD70. It was an awful historical event. But for Jesus, it was also a theological event, an act of God's judgment on Israel for rejecting him. In fact, it would mark the end of the time of Israel's specialness as God's people, until the gospel had been preached to all nations and every Gentile God had chosen to believe in

Jesus had done so (Ro 11:25). In this sense, although the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 may not seem relevant to us today, it is an important reminder of the time we live in: the time when the gospel is going out to all the world, until everyone who has been chosen to believe in Jesus has come to him. When that has happened, then the end can come.

**Read 21:25-28**

13. What will happen at the end of the world?
14. Who will come at that time? (See Daniel 7:13-14)
15. What should disciples who are alive at that time do?

When the end finally comes, there will be no mistaking it: the heavens will be shaken and 'the Son of Man' - the divine-human king from Da 7:13, who Jesus identifies as himself - will come in glory. The disciples who are alive at that time should 'stand up and lift up their heads' when they see this, because it means their salvation is near.

**Read 21:29-33**

16. What do you think the point of this parable is?

**Read 21:34-38**

17. What should disciples of every age do in light of the end coming?

As Christians, we don't know when the end will come. One key step in God's judgment of the world has already happened: the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. Now, the gospel must go into all the world until all of God's elect - Jew and Gentile - have responded in faith. Then, the end can come. Until then, all the normal parts of life in a fallen world - false claims about Jesus and persecution of his followers, wars, and natural disasters - will continue to happen. As we live through these events, we are to know they are a normal part of life and trust God in them, but also to know they won't last forever. One day, Jesus will return, and we will be redeemed. While we wait for that day, we are to live in godliness, and pray in faith.