

## Preparing for the End of the Age

Series: Encountering Jesus (through the Gospel of Luke)

February 23, 2020 – Brad Bailey

### Luke 21:5-38 (ESV)

And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, <sup>6</sup> “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” <sup>7</sup> And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.” <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. <sup>11</sup> There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> This will be your opportunity to bear witness. <sup>14</sup> Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, <sup>15</sup> for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. <sup>16</sup> You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. <sup>17</sup> You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. <sup>18</sup> But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> By your endurance you will gain your lives. <sup>20</sup> “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. <sup>21</sup> 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, <sup>22</sup> for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the

roaring of the sea and the waves, <sup>26</sup> people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” <sup>29</sup> And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. <sup>31</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. <sup>34</sup> “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. <sup>35</sup> For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> 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.” <sup>37</sup> And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. <sup>38</sup> And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

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Series #59 / Luke 21:5 – 38

### Intro

It's been noted that when there is that which may be really hard ahead... most people tend to want to avoid it. The truth is that **we waste more energy trying to avoid it rather than preparing for it. Jesus helps counter that.**

As **we continue** in our extended series "Encountering Jesus through the Gospel of Luke... we come to a juncture in which Jesus speaks of what is to come at the end of the age...the end of the world as we know it.

It's the kind of news we may want to avoid. But what is to come is going to come... and if we listen...we will understand that Jesus isn't just giving us **information**... he is providing words of **preparation**.

**This text is longer than we usually focus on...** but it's worth hearing Jesus in the whole of this moment and message.

**So lets focus in** on this moment together. [1]

Luke 21:5-38 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, <sup>6</sup> "As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." <sup>7</sup> And they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. <sup>11</sup> There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> This will be your opportunity to bear witness. <sup>14</sup> Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, <sup>15</sup> for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. <sup>16</sup> You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. <sup>17</sup> You will be hated by all for my name's sake. <sup>18</sup> But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> By your endurance you will gain your lives. <sup>20</sup> "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. <sup>21</sup> 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, <sup>22</sup> for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, <sup>26</sup> people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” <sup>29</sup> And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. <sup>31</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. <sup>34</sup> “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. <sup>35</sup> For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> 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.” <sup>37</sup> And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. <sup>38</sup> And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

That’s a **LOT to try and take in.**

**As we have ventured** through encountering Jesus in the Gospel of Luke...up until now...**most of the portions are shorter and easier to grasp...** either a **briefer description of an action** Jesus takes... or a **briefer exchange with a more succinct teaching.**

But here... **Jesus is a bit more extensive.**

**Essentially... Jesus is warning about what is to come...** but most importantly ...he wants them to realize what it will take to prepare for what is to come. So I want to **help us understand** at least the **basic nature of what Jesus is describing...and then his challenge.**

**It begins with the disciples in awe of the temple.**

**5 And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings,**

**Imagine this** for a moment....

These **young men from outlying areas...** and now standing **in Jerusalem ...the city** that **represents their people...their place in the world...** one they believe God gave them.

They are **at the temple itself.** In fact **it is the center of the city.**

The temple was indeed impressive, ...covering **about one-sixth** ... of the ancient city of Jerusalem. The **building complex** ... was **nearly five hundred yards long** ... 5 football fields long... and **four hundred yards wide.**

**Each foundation stone** ... was almost the size of a box car (67 ft. long, 18 ft. wide, 12 ft. high).

And they are **marveling** at it's **grandness** and **greatness**.

If that isn't enough wow...they are **standing with the one believed** to be the **true king**. (Recall they think that Jesus at the temple means triumph at hand...political rule...perhaps imagine him on the throne as David had been.)

Jesus uses that to prepare them for what is to come.

**he said, 6 “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”**

It's not hard to imagine a “**Say what?**” response. But Jesus had spoken of such consequences coming before...so this may have been more of an “**Oh yea**” **moment**.

It wasn't easy to take this in.

In the time of Jesus, the Temple was THE spiritual center for Jews. It was the only place of sacrificial worship for a people that lived throughout the known world. It's priestly institution had a central place in the Torah, the Jewish Law. The Temple represented the core of Judaism that had lasted for centuries.

This is **the sacred place** in which the **created can engage the Creator**... is going to be destroyed.

He is describing the end of their world as they had known it.

In truth... it was **part of a fulfillment of something greater**.

> **Everything before was a symbol of what was now at hand.**

**Jesus had now come** as the **exact representation of God...in his nature**.

He was **reconstituting in himself** the Torah as God's Word...and **the temple as God's presence**.

**He is the bearer of God's presence**... the place at which **the perfection of God meets the sinfulness of man**.

And in receiving him... embodying him...we become his body. We become this collective embodiment... the church... a new type of priesthood and temple.

**That is what is now at hand.**

But when the old order is ending... conflict will arise. He knew that there were powers of evil that ruled this world... and that **he would bring a death blow**...but that death blow would be like that upon a **serpent who then writhes in it's final defiance**.

He now tells them to **be prepared** for **three types of hard signs that that will come** ...that they needed to be prepared for. There are **three types of conflict that will be rising up**... and **the order in which he says they will come**... begins personally as there will be a social reaction to being identified with Jesus... a hatred that will include even one's own family & friends. Then

the center of the nation (Jerusalem)...will be destroyed...and finally **some form of signs in the larger natural order.**

**First...** there will be **opposition in their social realm...** hatred...and persecution.

**12 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you... 16 You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake.**

Hard words.

This captures the potential of suffering in both body and heart... infliction of the body...but also rejection by those whose bonds one longs for most.

**And secondly, Jerusalem... and it's people will be besieged. [1b]**

**20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21 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, .... 24 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.**

And **finally...** he speaks of some **forms of signs in nature itself.**

**25 "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

**As for these signs...** a **primary question arises** as to whether these refer to events that unfolded upon the generation he was speaking to...or to that which is yet to come at the end of the age when he returns.

For at one point he adds...

**32 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.**

Now there are a few different views as to how to understand what Jesus meant by this reference to "this generation."

Some note that the **word for "generation"** can also refer to the whole race ...either the Jewish people or humanity in general. That certainly has some merits. [2]

Some note the potential for a dual fulfillment. Many prophecies seem to have both an **immediate form of fulfillment** as well as a **more ultimate future fulfillment...** and as such... some aspects of these end times were fulfilled in that actual first generation, but some speak to another point prior to his return.

Charles Spurgeon saw a dual fulfillment ...and said: **“We must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple as being a kind of rehearsal of what is yet to be.”**

At this juncture I believe that is the **most natural way to understand this**. I believe that **he is initially responding to there question** about the temple’s destruction...and his initial response is **focusing on that actual generation** ... but he then speaks of the day when he will return as well. [2b]

**It must have sounded a bit dramatic if not crazy**...to think that such a mass persecution... and mass destruction... was going to unfold within a generation.

**Jesus declared these words** in the year of his crucifixion... **33 AD**... so within a literal generation would imply that such events would unfold within the next 50 years?

**What is striking is what took place after Jesus spoke these words.**

Soon his followers would see how the religious leaders and Roman Empire sought to silence this figure and all who followed. **His resurrection emboldened them... but as the news spread**...those threatened by it became more forceful. **Families were torn... friendships were torn**...and they were **brought before governors and kings** just as Jesus said...and **by 64 AD** the most evil ruler of all... **Nero... would use them as a scapegoat**... and bring widespread torture and killing. [3] **Just as Jesus had foretold.**

And then **in 70 AD**... Rome surrounds Jerusalem....and destroys the city in a horrific manner. (The only eyewitness account speaks of how “the Jews let out a shout of dismay that matched the tragedy.”) [3b] The temple was burned, ... It is believed that **the gold inlay melted** ... and seeped between the large stones. And in turn ... **the stones were removed by the Romans** ... in order to retrieve the gold. [3c]

As such, **Jesus’ dramatic words were fulfilled**: Not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down. (Luke 21:6)

And as for **signs in nature**...we simply can’t speak for certain what exactly these statements refer to. [4a] But the **one eyewitness writes of strange lights and frightening signs in the sky** as the siege took place. And others note that one of the most dramatic of all events...even to this day.... came just nine years after the fall of Jerusalem. It was the eruption of **Mt. Vesuvius** that poured down so massively and quickly on the cities of **Pompeii** and nearby **Herculaneum** that the people were turned into statues... with horror on their faces.

That was in **79AD**.... And evidence has been found that **immediately some made the correlation that this was judgment for Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem just 9 years earlier...almost to the day.** [4b]

**All this took place within a generation.**

So here are these disciples... finally arriving in Jerusalem... **awaiting triumph...and Jesus tells them what must have more dramatic than their anyone could have expected... yet these very things come to pass.**

And the **most likely understanding** was that **this was just the beginning** of what would come... or that the ultimate end of this age will come with even great conflict ... and opposition. And **we are wise to grasp** that the **purpose of Jesus' words** was **not a matter of fascination...but preparation.**

The disciples want to know the “when” and “what” about what will occur...they wanted to “be in the know.”

But **Jesus is clearly focused on how to be prepared** ... when the world seems to be falling apart.

**This is not about information...but preparation.**

Jesus wants them to be prepared...and **that begins with their expectations.**

You can never be prepared if you don't know what to expect.

But with those expectations he wants to empower them.

**13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness.**

**Embrace the expectations but also the opportunity.**

Now...this may sound like a strange sense of opportunity.

When the world falls apart... you will have an opportunity to testify about the one who offers life.

That likely **strikes some of us** in very **different ways.**

Some... **may not yet grasp** that **he gave his life** for you and for every life around you. So you **naturally don't connect yet to testifying about it.**

Some... **feel conflicted** about **what it means to testify...**to be **a witness.** You only imagine an exchange that is by nature judgmental... evokes hypocrisy or superiority.

We may do well to consider the role of a good witness.

First of all...the role of a witness is to **answer questions ... that are presented to them.**

If a witness speaks out of turn ... or rambles on, .... the judge ... will call them ... “out of order.”

Some of us can learn from that.

We answer questions ... of those around us .... who are seeking the Truth.

Second: A good witness is believable.

Does our life reflect that we know and serve the One we claim to serve?

Thirdly, ... we simply testify ... to the truth ... that we know.

We don't have to know everything...we testify to what we do know...what we have experienced.

**But how do we remain strong when the world is falling apart?**

I want to finish being sure we hear what Jesus imparts in his words.

## **1. Don't chase those who claim a special role or knowledge of impending timing regarding the end of the age.**

**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. 9 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."**

**In the days following Christ...** some rose up with claims... they would lead those who followed against Rome... only to perish. **Even in the modern era** some have come and led groups off with claims that the end has come. The **tragic cult groups** that followed **Jim Jones** or **David Koresh**. [5]

He is saying **people are going to play on the nature of these signs...** and make claims. Don't get drawn into these claims by the **power of vain fascination** and **fear**. It may be natural to be fascinated by looking to predictions and predictors of the end of the world... but Jesus warns of the limitations. The great truth is that everything that God has said would come has been unfolding... but that it could always get far worse...so we shouldn't chase our fascination too far or follows those who try to play on it. And as for fear... it is a powerful force that will always try to get a hold on us. But I don't recall fear as being one of the fruits of the Spirit.

## **2. Face what is temporal by grasping what will last.**

**33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.**

His reference to heaven is not speaking of the eternal realm. The word was also used to speak of the skies...especially when used in conjunction with the earth. In other words...**the created realm as you know it...will pass away...it will transition into a perfected order.**

**The ground that your sitting on is impermanent, but Jesus' words are permanent.** [6a]

When we see people in the midst of a tornados, what do they try to take a hold of? They try to take hold of a telephone pole are something more stable. I wonder if we aren't doing just the opposite... like those grabbing twigs... when we become most attached to politics... or technology... all good and valuable...but not permanent.

So as the world around you falls apart...**realize that there is a voice that speaks from the eternal realm...** and what it speaks of will never pass away.  
**So root your soul in what will last.** [6b]



**3. Don't sink into discouragement ... rather keep looking ahead, connecting in prayer, and faithful.**

***34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."***

When hard times come... it's natural to become overwhelmed... **allow our souls to be deflated.** He warns us against **dissipation**... which simply refers to **wasting our energy... squandering it.** [7]. And that type of squandering comes with choosing to **use alcohol... or drugs...or TV...or any way of withdrawing.** We essentially **try to escape...but it's a false escape.** The anxieties of life are still there.... and they keep us spinning without focus.

**I believe this is such a vital word to hear from Jesus today.**

I don't know if you would describe yourself as overwhelmed...but I do know that most people have been feeling more overwhelmed than in the past...more anxious... more deflated. Our world seems to be facing greater variety of conflict... political... moral... economic... the crisis of a spreading virus and the sustainability of the planet.

Jesus says... don't withdraw. Don't look down... look forward.

Look at that may come and see it for what it is...temporal.

This is a time to stay connected to God in prayer.

A time deepen your soul in what will last...and embrace the call to be different... to be faithful.

The Associated Press ran a story a few years ago... describing how Monty Coles was flying a small single-engine plane ... and when he was at 3,000 feet in the air ...he discovered a stowaway peeking out at him from the plane's instrument panel: a 4 1/2-foot snake. Coles attempted to swat the snake but it fell to the pilot's feet, then darted to the other side of the cockpit.

While maintaining control of the single-engine plane with one hand, Coles grabbed the reptile behind its head with his other.

"There was no way I was letting that thing go," he said. "It coiled all around my arm, and its tail grabbed hold of a lever on the floor and started pulling."

The next step was to radio for emergency landing clearance.

"They came back and asked what my problem was," he said. "I told them I had one hand full of snake and the other hand full of plane. They cleared me in."

"Nothing in any of the manuals ever described anything like this." But advice given 25 years earlier from his flight instructor sprung to mind: "No matter what happens, fly the plane." [8]

> Jesus says something similar to each of us today: "No matter what happens, fly the plane." You may have to deal with a snake...but you have to keep flying the plane that is your life. Don't let what scares you control you. You need to stay on course and stay true to God's purpose for you - no matter what, fly the plane.

## **Closing Prayer / Ministry: Against the dissipation / fatigue many feel.**

**Resources:** John Hamby (A Three-fold Warning); Larry Broding (Appearance Over Content?); Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III (“Hated By All On Account of My Name” & My Words Will Not Pass Away); Jeffrey Smead (What Do You Do When Your World Is Falling Apart?); Alistair Begg - What Does "This Generation" Mean?

### **Notes:**

1. The length of this text is longer than serves well for a sermon. I chose to try and work with such length because 1) I was bound by how a series through Luke fit with in a limited time, and 2) I found this text difficult to divide without losing the overall connectedness of what Jesus said. I chose the ESV translation for this passage because it includes the word “opportunity” in verse 13, which is helpful as a central point (and is used in most translations including NLT and GW but not NIV); “this generation” in verse 32; and the more fitting general term “dissipation” in verse 34. Each of these terms provide a meaningful element to work with.

1b. The language reflects upon what had been warned of through the Old Testament prophets. 21:22 these are days of vengeance Jesus is likely referencing Hos 9:7, which describes Israel’s impending destruction for rejecting God and His prophet (compare Isa 63:4; Jer 5:29). all the things that are written Refers to other oracles of destruction against Jerusalem (e.g., Jer 6:1–8; 26:1–9; Mic 3:12).

21:24 Jerusalem will be trampled down An allusion to the ancient Greek (Septuagint) translation of Zech 12:3, which describes Jerusalem as a stone trampled by the nations. This is part of Zechariah’s oracle against the city for its unfaithfulness. Compare Dan 8:13; Rev 11:2. From Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 21:22–24). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

2. In [Genesis 2:4](#), “generations of the heavens and the earth” (ESV) seems to include all of human history—the era begun by the creation of the universe.

2b. For those who want to consider the issue of what “this generation” refers to more extensively, I would highly recommend Alistair Begg - What Does "This Generation" Mean? - | January 1, 2000

<https://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/what-does-this-generation-mean>

3. In Acts, Luke details some of this persecution (e.g., Acts 5:17–18; 7:54–8:3; 12:1–5).

Despite its growing popularity, Christianity was sometimes misunderstood and membership could bring enormous risks. Widely criticized after the Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD, the Emperor Nero tried to divert attention away from his own failings by providing an easy scapegoat: the Christians.

Although the followers of Jesus were working hard to spread the message, there were still very few Christians in Rome. They were regarded with suspicion. Some important Christian rituals were mistaken as cannibalism, others as incest. Christians became an easy target.

Nero wasted no time. He arrested and tortured all the Christians in Rome, before executing them with lavish publicity. Some were crucified, some were thrown to wild animals and others were burned alive as living torches.

The [Acts of the Apostles](#) claims that the [Jewish Christian](#) couple [Priscilla and Aquila](#) had recently come from Rome to [Corinth](#) when, in about the year 50, [Paul](#) reached the latter city, indicating that belief in Jesus in Rome had preceded Paul.

Historians consistently consider Peter and Paul to have been [martyred](#) in Rome under the reign of [Nero](#) in 64, after the [Great Fire of Rome](#) which, according to [Tacitus](#), the Emperor blamed on the Christians. – From Wikipedia

Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples that they would be persecuted and face severe opposition to their witnessing. Right at the onset of His ministry, He told them:

Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you ([Matthew 5:11-12](#)).

And to His disciples in the Upper Room discourse:

Remember the word that I said to you, “A slave is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogues; but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God ([John 15:20; 16:1-2](#)).

As the church moved out from the confines of Jerusalem, it began to fulfill the Great Commission. The enemies of Christ sought to destroy the church but persecution only led to wider and fuller proclamation of the gospel. The believers could have been satisfied to settle down in Jerusalem, but God forced the church’s hand and used persecution to fulfill [Acts 1:8.385](#) The repeated refrain in the Book of Acts is, “And the word of God kept on spreading and the number of the disciples continued to increase...” (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31).

3b. As noted [here](#), “Gessius Florus loved money and hated Jews. As Roman procurator, he ruled Judea, caring little for their religious sensibilities. When tax revenues were low, he seized silver from the temple. As the uproar against him grew, in A.D. 66, he sent troops into Jerusalem who massacred 3,600 citizens. Florus’s action touched off an explosive rebellion—the First Jewish Revolt—that had been sizzling for some time.” Soon after, Titus was sent to command the besieging of Jerusalem.

The only claimed eyewitness account is that of Josephus... which one can at various places including: [The Romans Destroy the Temple](#).

In it he says “There was no pity for age and no regard was accorded rank; children and old men, laymen and priests, alike were butchered; every class was pursued and crushed in the grip of war, whether they cried out for mercy or offered resistance.

Through the roar of the flames streaming far and wide, the groans of the falling victims were heard; such was the height of the hill and the magnitude of the blazing pile that the entire city seemed to be ablaze; and the noise - nothing more deafening and frightening could be imagined.

There were the war cries of the Roman legions as they swept onwards en masse, the yells of the rebels encircled by fire and sword, the panic of the people who, cut off above, fled into the arms of the enemy, and their shrieks as they met their fate. The cries on the hill blended with those of the multitudes in the city below; and now many people who were exhausted and tongue-tied as a result of hunger, when they beheld the Temple on fire, found strength once more to lament and wail. Peraea and the surrounding hills, added their echoes to the deafening din. But more horrifying than the din were the sufferings.”

3c. Many, including [here](#), refer to the belief that the stones were taken down to gain the gold inlay that tilted in the fire. It is uncertain what the original source of this belief is.

4a. The signs that are spoken of in nature can be understood in a few ways. They could be understood in their more common idiomatic symbolic ways... which is most consistent with their use throughout OT prophecy. In these cases, they are clearly not all literal, but an allusion to what is happening to the nations. And lastly, they may refer to other signs of earthly force such as Mt. Vesuvius and the like. They could be part of very unusual literal experiences that happened as part of the siege of Jerusalem. We find this in the eyewitness account from Josephus and also history recorded by Tacitus describing such phenomena. Here are the details.

Josephus (Jewish Wars)

Jewish War 6:289 (6.5.3.289) Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year.

Jewish War 6:290 (6.5.3.290) Thus also, before the Jews’ rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour.

Jewish War 6:291 (6.5.3.291) This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it.

Jewish War 6:296 (6.5.3.296) So these publicly declared, that this signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius [Jyar],

Jewish War 6:297 (6.5.3.297) a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it,

Jewish War 6:298 (6.5.3.298) and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen

Jewish War 6:299 (6.5.3.299) running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities.

Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise,

Jewish War 6:300 (6.5.3.300) and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, “Let us remove hence.”

Tacitus, Histories, Book 5

"Prodigies had occurred, which this nation, prone to superstition, but hating all religious rites, did not deem it lawful to expiate by offering and sacrifice. There had been seen hosts joining battle in the skies, the fiery gleam of arms, the temple illuminated by a sudden radiance from the

clouds. The doors of the inner shrine were suddenly thrown open, and a voice of more than mortal tone was heard to cry that the Gods were departing. At the same instant there was a mighty stir as of departure. Some few put a fearful meaning on these events, but in most there was a firm persuasion, that in the ancient records of their priests was contained a prediction of how at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers, coming from Judaea, were to acquire universal empire."

4b. The Destruction of Pompeii—God’s Revenge? - July/August 2010 *Biblical Archaeology Review*

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-near-eastern-world/the-destruction-of-pompeii-gods-revenge/>

Reveals that some immediately made the connection between the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman powers 9 years earlier ... almost to the day.

Also of interest...

Evidence of Christianity in First Century Pompeii -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aakJEflzVdk>

Yes, There Were Christians In Pompeii <https://www.thepostil.com/yes-there-were-christians-in-pompeii/>

We do know that St. Paul landed in the harbor town of [Puteoli](#) (modern-day Pozzuoli) in the year 61 AD (Acts 28: 13-14), which lies about thirty miles west of Pompeii.

Paul mentions that there were Christians in Puteoli, which means that followers of Jesus were already to be found in smaller towns around Naples.

5. Some examples of false predictions can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

The “Jonestown Massacre” occurred on November 18, 1978, when more than 900 members of an American cult called the Peoples Temple died in a mass suicide-murder under the direction of their leader Jim Jones (1931-78). It took place at the so-called Jonestown settlement in the South American nation of Guyana. Prior to the terrorist attacks of [September 11, 2001](#), the tragedy at Jonestown marked the single largest loss of U.S. civilian lives in a non-natural disaster.

6a. Jesus words harken back to what God spoke through the prophet Isaiah declaring “The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the Word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8)

6b. Similarly, Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III notes, “But there's also encouragement in this passage and you'll see it if you look especially in verse 18. “Not a hair of your head will perish. Even though you're hated by all for the sake of My name, not a hair of your head will perish.” Now this cannot mean that Christians will not suffer personal losses, physical torment, and even death.

Think of it. The very first Christian witness recorded in the book of Acts by Luke, the author of this book, a man named Stephen who bore public witness in the face of his contemporaries was stoned to death, but Jesus’ words are still true. Jesus does not mean that bearing witness to Him will mean that you will not lose your reputation, that you will not lose your vocation, that you will not lose your family, that you will not be exiled from your people, that you will not endure physical persecution, or even ultimate martyrdom. Jesus’ words here do not guarantee us that we will be spared of any kind of suffering and persecution and death in this life, but it is a promise that all those who are in union with Him can never be taken from His hand. The one thing the world cannot take from you is your God.

And you know I have to wonder if the apostle Paul, as he was writing Romans 8:31-39, didn't have Jesus' words here in mind — that “neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor nakedness or persecution or peril or sword can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ.” And that's what Jesus is saying here. “No one can take you from Me. Not one hair of your head will perish. You will live with Me forever. They may take everything from you, including your life, but they can't take Me from you, and if you have Me, you have life eternal.” (From message: “Hated By All On Account of My Name”)

7. The word ἀσωτία (asōtía) is translated into “**dissipation**”. It could be seen as a culture or society breaking apart (dissipating) into anarchy, such as rioting, which is how translations use it in 1 Peter 4:4. Ephesians 5:18 makes a reference to being intoxicated as leading to this.

8. Source: Associated Press , June 3, 2006