

A GLORIOUS END FOR US (vv. 25-35)

A. GENERAL SIGNS OF THE END (vv. 25-26)

²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

B. AN UNMISTAKABLE SIGN (vv. 27-28)

²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

C. A PARABLE (vv. 29-31)

²⁹ He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

D. A PROMISE (vv. 32-33)

³² “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

E. A WARNING (vv. 34-35)

³⁴ “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come on 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.”

F. AN EXAMPLE (vv. 37-38)

³⁷ Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, ³⁸ and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.

1. Why should we “lift up our heads” at the prospect of Christ’s return?
2. What are some general signs and conditions we should take note of?
3. How will his return be good news for some, and horrible news for others?
4. How should we live in light of the general chaos in the world and the prospect of Christ’s imminent return (vv. 34-35)?
5. How does Jesus’ teaching in the temple provide a vivid example of how we should conduct ourselves a world that is spinning out of control?

SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 2023



LUKE

A PROMISE KEPT

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS | LUKE 21:5-38

Judging by the books we read, the movies we watch and even the popular music we listen to, we all have a fascination with the end of the world

A few years ago REM rocketed their way to the top of the pop charts with the catchy little tune, “Its The End of the World as We Know It.” While the melody is light and breezy, the lyrics are dark and foreboding.

Cormac McCarthy’s masterful novel, “The Road” captures the general sense of despair many experience as they look to the future.

The movie is set in a dystopian future where a father and son navigate their way through an apocalyptic waste land in hope of making their way to the coast and the promise of a brighter future. At the end of a grueling and perilous journey they finally arrive at the coast, only to find it strewn with skeletal remains and bleached whale carcasses. It is no different, and perhaps even more desolate, than the landscape they traversed to get there.

The father and son show the wear and tear of their journey. They are bruised and broken, malnourished and gaunt, ragged and listless. The father in particular has very little hope and very little life left in him. Its obvious from the final frame the son will soon be alone.

The son looks at at the sea, and asks, “What is on the other side?” His father who has encouraged hope and endurance throughout their journey finally gives into despair. “Nothing” he tells his son. The son with a final glimmer of hope responds, “there has to be something.”

In Luke 21, Jesus challenges his disciples sense of false hope and security in order to let them know in spite of a world in chaos, there is something on the other side. In Christ, we have every reason for hope.

A DEVASTATING END FOR JERUSALEM AND ITS TEMPLE (vv. 5-24)

A. A DIRE PREDICTION (vv. 5-7)

⁵ Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ⁶ “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.” ⁷ “Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

In Jesus’ day, Herod had invested a great deal of his resources in restoring the temple to its former glory. The temple not only impressed the disciples, it impressed Roman historians as well. Tacitus, who was familiar with Rome’s ambitious building projects, marveled at its beauty and opulence.

1. What about the temple might have impressed the disciples?
2. Why was Jesus less than impressed?
3. What are some things that are impressive to us that are less than impressive to God?
4. What does the demise of the temple foreshadow about many of the things we look to for a sense of permanence and security?

B. GENERAL SIGNS OF THE END (vv. 8-18)

1. False Messiahs and False Hope (v. 8)

⁸ He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them.

2. Wars and Uprisings (vv. 9-10)

⁹ When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.” ¹⁰ Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

3. Natural Phenomena (v. 11)

¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

4. Persecution (vv. 12-15)

¹² “But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. ¹³ And so you will bear testimony to me. ¹⁴ But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵ For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

5. Family Conflict (vv. 16-19)

¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ Everyone will hate you because of me. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ Stand firm, and you will win life.

Jesus does not initially answer the disciples questions. Rather than describing the signs of the temple impending destruction, he describes the general conditions the disciples will be face in his absence.

1. While these aptly describe the conditions the disciples experienced in the book of Acts, how are they part of our experience as well?
2. Jesus offers several pieces of advice for navigating a world in chaos. “Watch out that you are not deceived.” “Do not follow them.” “Do not be frightened.” “Do not worry beforehand how you will defend yourself.” “Stand firm and you will win life.”
3. How might these apply to us?
4. Jesus tells the disciples that these are the conditions under which they “will bear testimony” to him. How does the chaos around us provide unique opportunities to “give a reason for the hope that we have?”

C. AN UNMISTAKEABLE SIGN (vv. 20-24)

²⁰ “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. ²² For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. ²³ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Jesus’ prediction that “not one stone would be left on top of the other” was fulfilled in AD 70. A handful of religious zealots rebelled against Rome. In a show of imperial power, Titus marched into Jerusalem and leveled the city.

1. According to the text, why did God allow (or even ordain) the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple?
2. While the disciples might be alarmed by the demise of the temple, what seems to be Jesus’ greatest concern?
3. One of the deep truths of Scripture is that God is glorified in both judgment and grace. How do each of these reveal his character?