

ST JOSEPH THE WORKER
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Luke 21

The Return of the Son of Man

Signs, Sufferings, and Salvation: The Eschatological Discourse
 Luke 21 provides a panoramic view of prophecy and perseverance. Jesus challenges us not only to anticipate the future but also to live faithfully in the present. He calls us to emulate the sacrificial giving of the widow, to endure trials, and to watch for His return with expectant hope. This chapter reminds us that, in the midst of the world's turmoil, our redemption through Christ is certain.

The Widow's Offering (Luke 21:1-4)

Jesus observes a poor widow who puts two small copper coins into the Temple treasury, stating that she has given more than all the wealthy contributors because she gave all she had.

Prophecy of the Temple's Destruction (Luke 21:5-6)

When the disciples marvel at the Temple's beauty,
 Jesus prophesies its destruction,
 saying not one stone would be left on another.

Signs of the End Times (Luke 21:7-24)

In response to the disciples' questions about when and what signs will precede these events, Jesus describes a time of false prophets, wars, natural disasters, and persecution of His followers. He also predicts Jerusalem being trampled by Gentiles.

The Second Coming (Luke 21:25-28)

Jesus foretells signs in the sun, moon, and stars, and distress among nations. Then He describes His return in a cloud with power and great glory, encouraging His disciples to stand up and lift their heads, as their redemption draws near.

The Call to Watchfulness (Luke 21:29-38)

Jesus uses the parable of the fig tree to illustrate the certainty of the signs. He cautions His disciples to remain alert, pray for strength, and not be caught unprepared. Despite the religious leaders' opposition, people come early in the morning to hear Him at the temple.

Luke 21 presents a powerful discourse from Jesus, shifting from an example of sacrificial giving by a poor widow to prophecies of the Temple's destruction, signs of the End Times, and His Second Coming. Jesus also emphasizes the importance of spiritual vigilance and endurance in the face of trials and persecutions.

Themes

The Widow's Offering: **Generosity and Sacrifice.**

The Destruction of the Temple: **Foretelling the Future.**

Signs of the End Times: **Prophetic Discourse.**

Persecution and Endurance: **Faith under Trial.**

The Second Coming: **The Return of the Messiah.**

Watchfulness: **Spiritual Vigilance.**

Topics

The Widow's Offering
Prophecy of the Temple's Destruction
Signs of the End Times
The Second Coming
The Call to Watchfulness

People

Jesus Christ
The disciples
The poor widow

Locations

The Temple in Jerusalem



DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM BY ROMANS

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The Widow's Offering

- 1 As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury.
 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins.
 3 **“Truly I tell you,”** he said, **“this poor widow has put in more than all the others.”**
 4 **All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”**

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

- 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.”**



Signs of the End Times

21:5–6 These verses introduce a focus on the judgment that will come on the temple system (vv. 5–36), and they conclude the broader focus on the temple complex (19:47—20:1). Jesus highlights the danger of thinking that what appears outwardly impressive is a sign of God's favor. In Luke 21:5–36, Jesus says the destruction of Jerusalem is near and anticipates the end—the return of the Son of Man and the final judgment. Thus, Jesus' answer distinguishes between the fall of Jerusalem and the end time, and he alludes to the similarities between the two events. The message is for

7 “Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

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.**

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.**

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

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.

16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.

people to remain faithful, trusting in God’s sovereign purposes.

21:7–11 The reference to “the end” (v. 9) indicates that these verses describe general events that characterize life in this world all the way through to the end of time. These events are not the signs the disciples were asking about, whether of the destruction of Jerusalem or the end of the world. Jesus’ first concern here is that his disciples not be easily taken in by claims of the end or by events that aren’t signs of the end.

21:12–19 Though events in verses 8–11 do not indicate the nearness of the end, the immediate future for the disciples is one characterized by persecution (v. 12). The book of Acts describes some of that persecution as some of the disciples are brought before the authorities. Such trials will be opportunities to testify about the Lord Jesus. However, Jesus does not want his disciples to worry beforehand about what they will say; he wants them to be reassured that he will give them the words and wisdom needed in that hour. Hateful opposition may come from one’s closest family members and even result in death for some because of their association with Christ. Nevertheless, Jesus promises with a figure of speech that

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.

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.

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.

27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great

they can be assured of spiritual protection. Saving faith is persevering faith (v. 19). To trust in Jesus is to have eternal life even in the face of death.

21:20–24 Jesus has indicated some sort of timeline of events (vv. 9,12), but now he specifically refers to the question about Jerusalem that began this discussion (vv. 5–7). Jesus describes the destruction of Jerusalem as a picture of final judgment. Using common Old Testament language for God’s judgment (cf. Jer 46:10; 51:6), Jesus tells his disciples that before the destruction occurs, they must flee and avoid the city of Jerusalem at all costs (Lk 21:21). Jesus expresses how terrible the judgment on Jerusalem will be (vv. 23–24). “The times of the Gentiles” is a phrase that refers to the dominance of the Gentile nations that will last until the end time. With that thought, Jesus then turns to events of a more universal nature that are associated with the return of the Son of Man.

21:25–28 The reference to redemption (v. 28), the use of universal language (“the earth,” v. 25; “nations,” v. 25; “the world,” v. 26; “all those” on “the whole earth,” v. 35), and the way the coming of “the Son of Man” is used here (v. 27) and elsewhere in Luke (cf. 9:26; 12:40; 17:22–24,30; 18:8) indicate that Jesus is speaking about his future return and the final judgment. Dramatic cosmic disturbances will cause great fear and anxiety. It is at this time that

glory.

28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

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 nearby.

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.

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.”

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.

the Son of Man will return. “A cloud with power and great glory” is a reference to divine kingly authority and presence (cf. 9:26; Ex 16:10; 34:5; Nu 11:25). So, for believers, the beginning of these cosmic events brings confidence rather than fear because the fullness of their redemption and entrance into the new heavens and the new earth is drawing near.

21:29–36 It is in light of the hope of the consummation of the kingdom in its fullness that Jesus encourages his disciples to persevere. References to “this generation” elsewhere in Luke (7:31; 11:30,31,32,50,51; 17:25) suggest that in Luke 21:32 Jesus is referring to a continuation of wicked opposition to his people right to the end, when there will be both final vindication for his people and judgment of the wicked. Furthermore, Jesus reminds his disciples of the temporary nature of creation and the everlasting permanence of his own words, placing his words in the same eternal category as Scripture, the word of God (9:26; 16:17; Ps 119:89; Isa 40:8). Because of the assurance of Jesus’ sure and abiding word, and of the inescapable, sudden, and universal judgment to come, Jesus’ disciples should remain faithful, depending on God in prayer, in expectation of receiving the Son of Man’s approval when he returns (Lk 21:34–36).

Luke 21

Bible Study Questions

1. How does the widow's offering challenge your understanding of sacrificial giving?
2. What lessons can you learn from the prophecy about the Temple's destruction?
3. How do the signs of the End Times that Jesus describes relate to events in our world today?
4. What does Jesus' prediction of persecution mean for Christians today?
5. How should we understand and respond to Jesus' teaching about His Second Coming?
6. In light of Jesus' words about the future, how can we live faithfully in the present?
7. How does Jesus' call to watchfulness challenge you in your spiritual journey?
8. What comfort and hope do you find in Jesus' words about the certainty of redemption?
9. How can you apply the message of endurance and perseverance in your personal life?
10. How should we live our lives knowing that Jesus' return is imminent?
11. How does the message of this chapter help you in facing the trials and uncertainties of life?
12. How can we stay spiritually alert in a world full of distractions and temptations?
13. How can we prepare ourselves for the second coming of Jesus?
14. What can we do to ensure we are not led astray by false prophets or teachings?
15. How does this chapter shape your understanding of eschatology (the study of end times)?

- 16. What kind of prayer life does Jesus recommend in times of trial?**
- 17. How does Jesus' prophecy about Jerusalem resonate with its current status?**
- 18. How do you interpret the parable of the fig tree in your life context?**
- 19. In what ways does knowing about the second coming of Jesus influence your daily decisions?**
- 20. How can the teachings of this chapter help us to share the Gospel message with others?**

