

Lesson 9 24 December 2017

Take Heed, Watch, and Pray

Lesson Scope: [Luke 21](#)

All references in brackets pertain to Luke 21 unless otherwise noted

Lesson Focus

Jesus was in Jerusalem for the week of the Passover, the week leading up to His arrest and crucifixion. He taught in the temple during the day and spent the night on the Mount of Olives, which overlooked Jerusalem. One day, while in the temple, some of His disciples drew His attention to the architecture of the temple. Jesus, however, prophesied that the temple would be destroyed.

Later, on the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Jesus, "Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" (21:7). Jesus' response indicated that the disciples' questions were focused on His Second Coming and the end of the world, though some of the prophecies are also regarded as being fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus did not necessarily describe the events in chronological order. Instead, He presented a broad overview of the future.

Christ foretold that great signs in heaven and intensifying conditions on earth would precede His coming "with power and great glory." Since these things have begun to come to pass, we must live vigilantly, for our "redemption draweth nigh."

Luke records Jesus' teaching regarding the end of time and the signs and events leading up to His Second Coming. Many have attempted to place a time frame of when Jesus will return, but Jesus clearly taught that only God knows the hour. However, none of Jesus' prophecies need to be fulfilled yet before His Second Coming. He may come at any moment. Stress the imminence of this event, and our duty to watch with prayerful care so we may be prepared to "be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Most Bible scholars view Luke 21:20-24 as being fulfilled when Jerusalem was overthrown in A.D. 70. Jerusalem was so thoroughly razed that

the ground was plowed up and no building remained standing. Since then, the site was rebuilt and was under the control of the Romans, the Saracens, the Turks, and the British until 1948, though the Jews then reclaimed only partial ownership of the city. This illustrates the truth of Jesus' teachings. Just as those prophecies were fulfilled, so will be the promise of the Second Coming of Christ. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Lesson Aim: To receive admonition to greater watchfulness and readiness for Christ's return.

Theme Verse: [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.

Lesson Text

Take Heed—"Be Not Deceived"

[Luke 21:8-24](#) 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. ⁹But 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. ¹⁰Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: ¹¹And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. ¹²But 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. ¹³And it shall turn to you for a testimony. ¹⁴Settle *it* therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: ¹⁵For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake. ¹⁸But there shall not an hair of your head perish. ¹⁹In your patience possess ye your souls. ²⁰And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. ²¹Then 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. ²²For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³But 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. ²⁴And 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.

Take Heed—"Your Redemption Draweth Nigh"

Luke 21:25-33 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; ²⁶Men'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. ²⁷And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. ²⁹And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; ³⁰When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. ³¹So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. ³²Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. ³³Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Take Heed—"That Ye May Be Accounted Worthy"

Luke 21:34-36 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. ³⁵For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Watch 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.

Questions for Study

Take Heed—"Be Not Deceived"

1. What warning did Jesus begin with in answering the disciples' questions? Why is this important?
2. Why did Jesus encourage the disciples not to fear?
3. What are some provisions for facing persecution victoriously?

Take Heed—"Your Redemption Draweth Nigh"

4. Why do events that perplex and terrorize men inspire faith in the Christian?

5. What are some ways we can "look up, and lift up [our] heads"?

6. How does the promise of God's sure Word help the Christian?

Take Heed—"That Ye May Be Accounted Worthy"

7. Why will a person who is overcharged with the things of this life not be found worthy at Christ's return?

8. What are some essentials for escaping the impending judgment of this earth?

Analyzing the Passage

According to 21:24, Jesus is sharing signs and events regarding the time of the Gentiles. The first event fulfilling part of Jesus' prophecies occurred in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. We are now living in the time of the Gentiles.

Jesus counsels the disciples not to be "terrified" (21:9) when "wars and commotions" would come. This sign would not immediately mark the end of the age, since Jesus mentioned that the end was not "by and by" (Old English for "at once"). Jesus wanted them to understand that fear of these events would destroy their faith in His promises. He wanted to give them confidence and courage to face whatever the future held for them.

Perplexity (21:25) indicates the inability of nations to solve their economic, political, and social issues. Governments and economies will collapse, and people who trusted in these will be filled with fear.

Verses 25-36 seem to refer directly to the times immediately preceding Christ's Second Coming. The redemption that draws near (21:28) is the completion of redemption—the redemption of the body (Romans 8:23).

Principles and Applications

Take Heed—"Be Not Deceived"

1. Deception regarding the person and work of Christ will proliferate (21:8). The many variant forms of Christianity indicate that many people have come up their own interpretation of the Scriptures often twisting the truth and teaching a partial gospel. A movement can be identified as being part of the end-time deception by what it teaches and the results it produces. If it does not recognize the Deity of Christ, does

not promote discipleship, or ignores any doctrines of the Scriptures, it is a false religion.

2. We should not allow natural upheavals and wars to strike fear in our hearts lest they destroy our security in Christ (21:9-11). Constant worry and unease about events that are out of our control is an indication of a lack of faith in God's promises. God is not losing control of this world. Everything that happens is for His purposes. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

3. Persecution and spiritual conflict can potentially weaken Christian endurance (21:12-19). "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13). Satan is constantly embattling the saints to weaken them. Only by unceasing prayer and a daily walk with God can we face the conflict and be victorious. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

4. Tribulation can cloud our spiritual vision and hinder our ability to see God at work accomplishing His purposes (21:20, 24). Just as the Jews were unaware of the impending destruction of Jerusalem until it was too late, so it will be with those who are ignorant of or complacent toward the signs and warnings regarding the end times. Carefully obeying God's Word and heeding the warnings of Scripture is critically important to avoid losing sight of God's promises. Christ will one day return to judge all wickedness, which only those who are prepared will escape.

Take Heed—"Your Redemption Draweth Nigh"

5. Signs in nature point to the end times (21:25). Natural disasters of floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, and fires around the world should make us more aware of the culmination of time. God allows these things to happen to remind people of the futility of life and to give opportunity to repent. This earth will wax old as a garment and no amount of environmental efforts to save it will succeed.

6. Distress and perplexity of nations point to the consummation of all things (21:25, 26). World conditions reveal that economic woes, degrading moral and social issues, and conflicts between nations are increasing, no matter what efforts are put forth to check the downward spiral of evil and corruption. "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8). Trusting in our government or

money will utterly disappoint us because these will ultimately fail.

7. Watching with anticipation for Christ's coming should be the norm for the Christian (21:27, 28). Jesus told His disciples to be found watching and waiting for His return. He also told them to "occupy till I come." Everything we do or say must be done in light of what we would want to be doing or saying when Jesus comes. Our daily prayer should be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

8. Regardless of how long the delay, God's promises will be fulfilled (21:29-33). God is not restricted to time as His creation is. He will fulfill all He has said He would do. The reason for His delay in ending time as we know it is found in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Take Heed—"That Ye May Be Accounted Worthy"

9. Holiness of life identifies a person watching for Christ's return (21:34). The excesses of materialism can dull our spiritual senses if we become preoccupied with temporal things. Living as pilgrims and strangers in today's society keeps our priorities right regarding time and eternity and reminds us and others that life is truly a time of preparation for the future.

10. Spiritual diligence and prayer are essential for being worthy of Christ's return (21:35, 36). Daily communication with God through prayer will keep our hearts. Satan is ever busy trying to deceive and destroy anyone dedicated to serving Christ. May we guard our lives carefully and prayerfully so we may be found worthy of receiving the blessed rewards God has in store for those who are prepared at Christ's second coming.

Important Teachings

1. Deception regarding the person and work of Christ will proliferate (21:8).

2. We should not allow natural upheavals and wars to strike fear in our hearts lest they destroy our security in Christ (21:9-11).

3. Persecution and spiritual conflict can potentially weaken Christian endurance (21:12-19).

4. Tribulation can cloud our spiritual vision and hinder our ability to see

God at work accomplishing His purposes (21:20, 24).

5. Signs in nature point to the end times (21:25).

6. Distress and perplexity of nations point to the consummation of all things (21:25-26).

7. Watching with anticipation for Christ's coming should be the norm for the Christian (21:27-28).

8. Regardless of how long the delay, God's promises will be fulfilled (21:29-33).

9. Holiness of life identifies a person watching for Christ's return (21:34).

10. Spiritual diligence and prayer are essential for being worthy of Christ's return (21:35-36).

Answers to Questions

1. What warning did Jesus begin with in answering the disciples' questions? Why is this important?

Jesus warned of the deception that would surround His person and work.

History is replete with false messiahs claiming to have spiritual insight and guidance who have led many after their false doctrines. Deception is one of Satan's tactics to lead people away from truth. Even today, many false religions abound that promise to have the answers for man's spiritual needs, but truth is only found in the Word of God.

2. Why did Jesus encourage the disciples not to fear?

Fear is a natural reaction to danger. Though some fear is good in order to avoid physical dangers we may face, fear of events beyond our control is a mark of the faithless. Fear tends to paralyze. Faith that sees beyond the present unpleasant circumstances to the rewards for faithful living will help us live courageously and not fear the future. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

3. What are some provisions for facing persecution victoriously? Jesus spoke of the Comforter that would come after His ascension.

The Holy Spirit provides guidance to navigate the dangers we face on earth. The Lord will provide wisdom to answer our accusers. Jesus promised protection from spiritual dangers as well. "My Father, which

gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29). The knowledge of life beyond death gives us hope in regard to facing persecution here on earth.

4. Why do events that perplex and terrorize men inspire faith in the Christian?

The Christian has faith in the fact that all things that happen are in God's hands. God is in control of all events and allows natural disasters and suchlike to occur so people have opportunity to recognize Him. These events should remind them of the brevity of physical life.

5. What are some ways we can "look up, and lift up [our] heads"?

We must always be mindful that Jesus could come at any moment. Including the invitation for Christ to come for us in our daily prayers keeps us focused on living right so we are worthy of His return. Memorizing Scriptures, displaying mottoes, or posting Gospel signs regarding Christ's return will remind us as well. Using the phrase "Lord willing" in our speech helps us focus on the eternal aspect of life.

6. How does the promise of God's sure Word help the Christian?

We may become discouraged by all the secularization of society around us and the growing intolerance of Christianity. Yet God's Word will never be destroyed. The promises of God's Word are as true today as when they were given. God's Word promises salvation and victory to those who seek Him and believe.

7. Why will a person who is overcharged with the things of this life not be found worthy at Christ's return?

People seek pleasure, do drugs or alcohol, or immerse themselves in work or building wealth to distract their minds from the futility of this life. Such individuals have selfish motivations for doing these things and are not thinking about what will happen after this life, thus they are not preparing for the future.

8. What are some essentials for escaping the impending judgment of this earth?

First of all, we must consider our own sinfulness and recognize that through Christ alone we will find redemption for sin. We must live a repentant life and experience victory over sin because sin will bar us from heaven. A heart of love for the erring will cause us to tell others of the impending judgment for sin and the way to salvation. Love, forgiveness, patience toward men, submitting to a faithful church, being

led by the Holy Spirit, and studying and believing God's Word are all essential in preparing our hearts and lives for Christ's return.

Summarizing the Lesson

Jesus, Thy church with longing eyes
For Thine expected coming waits:
When will the promised light arise,
And glory beam from Zion's gates?

E'en now, when tempests round us fall,
And wintry clouds o'ercast the sky,
Thy words with pleasure we recall,
And deem that our redemption's nigh.

Come, gracious Lord, our hearts renew,
Our foes repel, our wrongs redress,
Man's rooted enmity subdue,
And crown Thy gospel with success.

Teach us in watchfulness and prayer
To wait for the appointed hour;
And fit us by Thy grace to share
The triumphs of Thy conquering power.
—*Wm. Hiley Bathurst, 1831*

Research Guide

1. Read 2 Peter 3 for further inspiration.
2. Matthew 24 and Mark 13 are parallel Scriptures to Luke 21 and provide additional details for better understanding.