

“When Will These Things Be?” Luke 21

- 1-4 – The widow’s offering was precious, in contrast to Israel’s self-focused shepherds (Ezek 34, Lk 20:47). App: Giving out of abundance, poverty *before God* rather than men (Mt 6:4).
- 5-7 – The disciples ask, “When will these things be?” in reference to *two* things: (1) the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and (2) the sign that these things are about to take place? However, the second thing in Matthew is “what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age” (see Mt 24:3). In their minds, the disciples thought of the destruction of the temple as such a cataclysmic event that it surely meant that the day of the LORD was here (Isa 13:9-11, Amos 5:18-20, Zeph 1:14-18). Hence, they are asking about both a sign of Christ’s return in judgment and this destruction of the temple in the same breath.
 - While the destruction of Jerusalem was certainly a judgment on Israel for rejecting the Messiah in 70 A.D. (Lk 19:41-44, 21:21-24), there is a greater judgment ahead, at a time no man knows (Mt 24:36, Acts 1:7, 1 Thess 5:4, 2 Pet 3:10, Rev 3:3, 16:15).
- 8-9 – A characteristic of living in the time called the “last days” is false christs seeking to deceive people and lead them astray (2 Tim 4:3, 2 Pet 2:1, 1 Jn 2:18, 4:1, 2 Thess 2:1-2).
- 10-11 – Another characteristic: Wars, natural disasters, suffering because of how the fall has affecting the creation (Rom 8:22). One day, this all will end (Isa 2:3-5, 11:6-9, Rev 21:1-14).
- 12-19 – Then persecutions come, another characteristic of living in the last days (Mt 10:22, 1 Pet 4:12-19) but also directly preceding the destruction of Jerusalem (v12). You cannot miss this reality in Luke’s second volume: See Acts 4:3, 5:18, 7:52-58, 8:1-3, 9:2, 9:15, 12:1-6, 16:16-24, 21:27, 22:4, 22:19, 23:24-24:27; 25:1-26:32, see also 2 Cor 11:24.
- 20 – In answering the disciples’ questions about a sign for when the destruction of Jerusalem is about to take place, he says that you will see it surrounded by armies (v20, cf. Lk 19:43-44) just before it is made desolate. In Matthew and Mark, instead of using the clear language of Luke (for the benefit of gentiles without OT background?), Jesus says calls for encirclement of Jerusalem the “abomination of desolation” (Mt 24:15, Mk 13:14). This term goes back to Daniel 9-11. Even if Antiochus Epiphanes was the short-term fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy in the second century B.C. as his army went into the temple, set up an alter to Zeus and sacrificed pigs on the alter (defiling the Holy of Holies), Christ’s reference is to a *future* event. Within 40 years (one “generation” in Jewish terms, see v32) of Jesus’ words, the temple would be desecrated again – but this time by Titus, whose armies carried idolatrous images of their “divine” Emperor. Josephus maintains that 1.1 million people were slaughtered in Jerusalem, with blood flowing in the streets and bodies piled up around the alter (defiling the Holy of Holies once again, the temple and city are left desolate).
- 21-24 – Jesus gives counterintuitive instructions to protect his sheep: go to the mountains.
- 25-28 – Now Christ addresses the end of the age. Some see this applying to 70 A.D., but Jesus uses language that is unmistakably related to His final glory-cloud appearing – (see Rev 1:7, 1 Thess 4:13-18, Acts 1:9). Note, the state of Israel being *re-established* is not a precondition for Christ’s return or something that has significance as a sign at all.
- 29-33 – A brief parable to remind us: Christ’s words will never pass away. He was right about Jerusalem, and He will be right about the end of the age (2 Pet 3:8, 1 Thess 5:1-11).
- 34-38 – This is the Son of God, *Hear Him* (Mt 3:17, Jn 10:27-28, 1 Thess 2:13). Do not fear!