

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon February 28, 2021

Luke 21: 25 – 28 – “First Century Hope in the Midst of Widespread Panic”

5 Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 6 "These things which you see--the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." 7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" 8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. 9 But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately."

10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head shall be lost. 19 By your patience possess your souls.

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22 For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray

always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

37 And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. 38 Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.

I. Introduction

- a. We continue with our study and meditations of Christ's Words to His disciples regarding the coming 1st century destruction of that very temple, with its massive stones and ornate decorations, its unspeakable opulence. Christ our Lord points their hearts, and ours, away from the transient temple/apostate Israel (seems so permanent!) to the Unshakeable Kingdom. The old, shakeable, unbelieving, rebellious, puny system gives way to the Kingdom of faith and obedience toward Christ, our Rock. The vanishing, weak kingdom of confusion and fear, founded upon ignorance and unbelief, that had twisted and perverted God's OT Word, crumbles and washes away under God's storm of wrath, giving way to the Unshakeable Kingdom of Christ.
- b. The Signs of the coming destruction of the Temple
 - i. False Messiahs/False Movements v8
 - ii. Wars/Uprisings v9-10
 - iii. Great Earthquakes, Famines, Pestilences, Fearful Sights and Great Signs in the heavens v11
 - iv. Persecution by Jews and Romans v12-19
 - v. Jerusalem surrounded by armies/time to flee v20-24
 - vi. Signs in heavens/distress on earth- v25,26
 - vii. Then comes the Son of Man's Redemptive Judgment v27,28
- c. We've seen that all these predictions in this section of Luke occur prior to and leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, as signs to the disciples of how they can know the destruction of the temple is at hand. Our Lord gives them the signs they will see in order to know when to flee away from the wrath of God upon apostate Israel. Last week, we read of Christ telling His followers the sign of desolation that should initiate their flight from Jerusalem and Judea (Jerusalem surrounded by armies), and our Lord taught them this sign initiated the prophesied days of vengeance upon rebellious Israel. In today's text, the Lord again describes heavenly/earthly disturbances and turmoil amongst the nations leading up to the Son of Man's judgment visitation upon Israel that began in AD66. In addition, He speaks of the great terror that will be upon the world as a result of these great shakings, and yet His disciples are given great hope in the midst of this widespread panic.
- d. An important reminder. We know that all of the signs occurred in the first century because the Bible says so, not because of historical accounts.
 - i. "29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Assuredly, I

say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

- ii. Yet, the Lord in His kindness has preserved for us historical records of these signs occurring during that generation. Praise be to God.
 - e. Luke 21: 25 – 28 – “First Century Hope in the Midst of Widespread Panic”
 - i. Celestial shakings
 - ii. Earthly shakings
 - iii. Distress of Nations
 - iv. Widespread Panic
 - v. Then the apostate Jews will see the Son of Man
 - vi. Hope in the midst of widespread panic
 - vii. Questions to know, love and obey God
- II. Comparing to Revelation 6, the 6th seal, throughout this sermon
- a. “12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"”
 - b. In this section of Revelation, John the apostle is granted a vision of the fulfillment of much of the Olivet Discourse prophecy. Jesus gave the prophecy to His disciples in AD30 before He was crucified. Jesus gave John the Revelation vision sometime in the early AD60s. So, the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse must include the relevant verses from John’s Revelation vision.
- III. Celestial shakings
- a. 25 “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”
 - b. Similar to v11b:
 - i. “and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.”
 - ii. But, v25 is more specific, mentioning signs in the sun, in the moon and in the stars.
 - c. Compare to Revelation 6:12,13

- i. "... and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth"
 - d. Signs in the sun
 - i. Revelation 6:12 is more specific: the sun became as black as sackcloth of hair – could be an eclipse, or supernatural darkening of the sun. Darkness on the earth.
 - ii. During the crucifixion: Luke 23:44-46
 - 1. "44 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' " Having said this, He breathed His last."
 - iii. During the plagues on Egypt: Exodus 10:20-23
 - 1. 20 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go. 21 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt." 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. 23 They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.
 - iv. In the first century
 - 1. Kayser "What about the darkening of the sun? We have three historians who spoke of the sun being darkened during the reign of Nero. Unfortunately, none of them specify day, month, nor year for the occurrence or the occurrences. But in looking through NASA's data on solar eclipses, the only solar eclipse to take place in that year was on June 11 and December 5, and both are too late to fit the exegetical time line, though the June 11 one would be close. But I'm convinced that it wasn't a solar eclipse. That wouldn't have brought fear to those people they knew astronomy....Could it have been natural phenomenon? Yes. But I have no problem in saying that it was a supernatural darkness such as happened at the crucifixion or at other times in history. The historian Tacitus was familiar with solar eclipses, but I find it interesting that he did not describe the darkenings of the sun under Nero as eclipses. Rather, he records "a thick succession of portents" that occurred in Nero's last years. A "portent" is a supernatural event that Tacitus thought occurred to signal a disaster. He says, "Then the sun was suddenly darkened and the fourteen districts of the city were struck by lightning."... Some people apply that here, but his dating is rather nebulous (it could have been earlier), so it is hard to pin down that specific darkening of the sun to a specific year. But to the skeptics who

don't believe in supernatural darkening of the sun, I would say that ancient historians did speak of them, and this one may have been one of the "thick succession of portents" that Tacitus speaks of."

- a. <https://kaysercommentary.com/Sermons/New%20Testament/Revelation/Revelation%206/Revelation%206-12-17.md#fnref11>

e. Signs in the moon

- i. Rev 6:12 is more specific: "the moon became like blood"
- ii. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 at Pentecost AD30, opening with an OT quote from Joel 2 that includes the blood moon phrase
 1. "15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.'" (also note the similarity with Rev 6 and our verses today: heavenly wonders, earthly signs, sun into darkness, moon into blood)
 2. So, Peter starts his acts 2 Pentecost sermon by pointing out that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost AD30 was the beginning of the prophetic process described in Joel 2, that would end with the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord, which in context is NOT likely to reference the final 2nd coming of Christ, but rather His judgment visitation that began in AD66.
- iii. Kayser "What about the moon becoming like blood? Some time ago you saw a blood red moon here in Omaha, didn't you? The blood red moon was a common feature, so its occurrence in AD 66 is not difficult to explain.[6] NASA's eclipse table[7] shows that this blood red moon may well have been due to an eclipse that happened in that year. But it could have been due to any number of atmospheric conditions that can produce a red moon. That phrase is very easy to explain."

f. Signs in the stars

- i. Kayser "And any of the ancients knew that when you were referring to stars falling to the earth, you were not referring to planets falling to the earth, but to meteorites falling to the earth.... E. P. Woodward describes a particularly brilliant display of meteorites in 1833 that was documented and could not be chalked up to exaggeration. He says, "They fell in

countless thousands, were visible throughout the whole Northern Hemisphere, alarming people on both continents, and they were variously described as "a rain of fire," a "celestial bombardment," "a luminous net-work of fire," "too wonderful and too surprising to describe," "a maze of radiance," and like expressions." Not only was [AD65-66] the year for Haley's Comet, but Josephus speaks of numerous signs in the sky (what he calls portents), such as a sword hanging over Jerusalem. Many have puzzled over that sword. Was it simply a supernatural light (that's the way I take it), or was it a formation from the meteorites that kept falling that year? In 1998 there was a massive meteorite shower over Italy that made a light in the sky that resembled a sword. ... Could it have been something like that? Who knows? But with two comets being prominently on display in AD 65-66, the debris from the comets could very well have filled the sky. So there is no problem taking the falling stars literally."

- g. Powers of the heaven will be shaken
 - i. A summary statement of what has already been said, and also heavenly disruptions often accompany earthly powers/kingdoms disruption.
- IV. Earthly shakings
- a. 25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."
 - b. We discussed the idea of the sea and the waves roaring in conjunction with the "great earthquakes" of v11. These great earthquakes of the 1st century are recorded in historical and geological data, as are the attendant tsunamis.
 - i. Kayser "Papadopoulos and Vassilopoulou, both of whom are experts in ancient seismology, mention a massive earthquake in AD 66 that totally destroyed the cities on the island of Crete and created tidal waves. And they base that on historical references that tie it to the thirteenth year of Nero, which would be AD 66. Another book documenting earthquakes and tsunamis over a 4000 year period speaks of the volcano of Santorini erupting in AD 66 and the islands in the Aegean Sea being shaken and later being inundated by a tidal wave."
- V. Distress of Nations
- a. 25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now

when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

- b. Again, the Lord repeats an earlier idea from v9,10 "9 But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." 10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.""
- c. Lange "This allusion to the profound anxiety which shall fill the human world, is peculiar to Luke. The same thought is further developed, Rev. 6:12–15"¹
- d. Wars, societal uprisings, nation fighting against nation, commotions, violence in the streets, loss of stability. All things we discussed in the sermon on v9,10.
- e. Jesus again emphasizes the widespread upheaval throughout the Roman empire during this timeframe shortly preceding the destruction of the Temple in AD70.

VI. Widespread Panic

- a. 25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."
- b. Perplexity: used only here in the NT.
 - i. Websters 1828 "To make intricate; to involve; to entangle; to make complicated and difficult to be understood or unraveled."
 - ii. The nations knew something very strange was occurring, but they couldn't untangle the riddle.
- c. Failing Hearts: used only here in the NT
 - i. To faint or swoon away
- d. Fearful expectations: used here and once in Acts
 - i. An expectation about the future that brings terror
- e. All these heavenly and earthly signs, the major regional and worldwide societal destabilizations, with earthquakes, tsunamis, wars and national distress, creates great confusion, terror and even a widespread failing of hearts leading up to the time of the coming of the Son of Man.
- f. Rev 6:15
 - i. 15 "And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains"

VII. Then the apostate Jews will see the Son of Man

- a. 25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which

¹ Lange, J. P., & van Oosterzee, J. J. (2008). [*A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Luke*](#). (P. Schaff & C. C. Starbuck, Trans.) (p. 324). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

- b. During this time of widespread panic, the climax of their terror will occur. The apostate Jews will see the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, coming in a cloud with power and great glory. This awesome heavenly sight occurred in conjunction with the beginning of the Great War of judgment against apostate Israel, known in history as the 1st Jewish-Roman war, and predicted by Daniel 9 as the 70th week of his 70 weeks prophecy.
- c. This kind of vision has already occurred in NT times:
 - i. Acts 7: "

VIII. Hope in the midst of widespread panic

- a. 25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

IX. Questions to know, love and obey God