

Last Things According to Jesus

Luke 21:5-38

Intro: It is assumed that most people want to know endings. Just think, when you go to the movies, how long do you stay? To the end. When you read a novel, you may put it down in the first 30 pages, but no one usually reads up to the last chapter then stops.

If you go to a concert, you stay to the end. If you see fireworks, you stay long enough for the Grand Finale.

It's natural to want to know how things end.

This is true of God's people—who know that *He is in control of how it ends*.

- This teaching is triggered by what the disciples observed in the elaborate beauty of the temple (v5).
- The temple no doubt was stunning to look at—silver-plated gates, gold-plated doors and massive white marble stones
- (v5) Jesus remarks: “Don't be overly impressed”.

He makes the point not to get too caught up with the external—the visible.

- Even the disciples were off target. The temple is not mainly about the external beauty, but the *presence of God, communion with God—it's not what it looks like on the outside, but what happens on the inside*.
- This turns into a lengthy teaching called the Olivet Discourse (v37)—also in Matt 24.
- Here, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple, the invasion and destruction of Jerusalem, and also what we call “end times”.
- But look with me at v7—because it is here where we see the heart of our Lord.

People are concerned with the *when*—when will these things take place?

We get really concerned about timing; we become very impatient.

But that's not where Jesus teaches us to live.

Instead of the when, Jesus teaches us the way to live. His major teaching emphasis is on the way disciples are to live.

Apply: Let me put it this way. Jesus would rather us focus on our spiritual habits than have our eschatology all figured out. We can still do vigorous study of Last Things — but if it doesn't change our behavior, then it means nothing.

- I see this section as having *double fulfillment*. Some of what Jesus says was fulfilled in AD 70, I believe (v8-24), yet some of it points to a future time before the return of Jesus (v25-28).

3 Lessons for the Last Days

Lesson 1: Beware of false teaching and paralyzing fear (v8-9)

- The first direct challenge that Jesus gives is to beware of false teaching.
- As we read through the NT, time after time there are warnings against false teachers. Every NT writer addressed them at some point—so it's no surprise to see Jesus give this as the first warning.
- Think of this in terms of the danger scale.
- When people hear Jesus say the temple will be destroyed—that sounds pretty dangerous. But it's nothing compared to the danger of false teaching.

The spiritual warning is “do not be led astray” —the word is also sometimes translated “do not be deceived”.

- Note that the false teachers claim to come *in Jesus's name* (v8), i.e. people who claim the authority of Jesus.

Apply: The reality of false teaching calls for biblical discernment. Let me ask, how much spiritual discernment do you have? Do you think you can detect false teaching well? Is your grasp of biblical doctrine deep? Friends, feast on God-glorifying doctrine. Be sure your theological tree has a robust root system.

- Secondly, Jesus predicts that times will get tough and chaotic...but tells his disciples not to be alarmed.

Application

—False teaching and fear are two main ways that Satan *kills gospel momentum*.

It would be very tempting for the church to lose momentum in the first century as false teaching and fear of the unknown crept in.

Lesson 2: Bear witness to the gospel in the face of persecution (v13-18)

- The disciples asked for “signs” (v7).
- We’ve already seen pervasive spread of false doctrine, but also persecution. That was a “sign” that Jesus’s word was trustworthy.

1. Be ready for persecution

- Starting in v12, Jesus shifts the focus to what can happen to believers just for being followers. If you notice, Jesus emphasizes that this happens “for his name’s sake” (v12 &17).
- He is clear that the persecution is strong enough that some will even face death (v16).

—Christians are to expect persecution for being godly in a godless world.

(2 Tim 3:12) “¹²Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus *will* be persecuted.”

Scripture says, “Don’t worry. If you are persecuted for following Jesus that is normal, if you are not persecuted...*maybe there is something wrong with you.*”

Illus: It reminds me of a long winter a few years back. I really started feeling blue. So, I asked a friend who has a doctorate in abnormal psychology what is going on. He chuckled and replied. “If you made it through a severely cold and long winter and you were not depressed...that would be abnormal!”

If we are not facing some pushback for our commitment to Christ, we may ask if it is really there and visible.

2. Be ready to witness

- Let's park on v13 and listen to the words of Jesus, "This will be your opportunity to witness."
- Also look at v14. Jesus says not to worry about what you are going to say.
- This does not mean we should not study the Bible—and know it well and be ready. Christians have a duty to sharpen our minds and be ready to engage.

(1 Pet 3:15)

“¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...”

- So, Jesus is not saying, “don't be ready” —instead I think he is teaching his disciples the importance of *relying on the Holy Spirit*.

(Acts 1:8)

“⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses...”. Throughout the book of Acts, over and over again, we see the Holy Spirit empowering the church to bold witness.

Illus: On Friday, June 7th, David Powlison died from pancreatic cancer. Powlison was a leading figure in the biblical counseling movement the last few decades. His obituary was on The Gospel Coalition *David Powlison 1949-2019*. Here is the story of his conversion as a man in his 20's.

“One Sunday evening, on August 31, 1975—some four years after they had graduated from Harvard—Bob spoke to David with unexpected, uncharacteristic candor. But that night Bob got very personal with him.

“David, Diane and I really love you. I respect you as much as anyone I know, but what you believe and how you are living . . . you are destroying yourself.”

David recounts what happened next:

“I knew he was right. The Holy Spirit used his words as an armor-piercing shell. I came under comprehensive and specific conviction of my sinfulness, uncleanness, unbelief, and unacceptability before Christ...I felt the weight of many sins.”

Bob shared with him [Ezekiel 36:25–27](#)

David continues:

“Bob invited me to ask God for mercy. I beseeched God for mercy. God was merciful. Promises from eons ago proved true— *God willingly saves, forgives sins, creates a new life, gives his own Spirit, promises great help to obey. He did all this. He found me and led me home. I was surprised by joy and by the love of Jesus.*”

***This captures what Jesus want his people to do before he returns. Share the hope of Christ.*

Gospel: If you are a David in this room, may the Spirit use his Words, even under the crushing weight of your sin, to know God’s mercy in Christ. He willingly saves, forgives, and creates new life! Christian friends, let’s live and ask God for a few Bob moments in life. Trust the Spirit to lead you, give boldness, and use his Word.

(v32) What does “this generation” mean?

Possibilities:

1. A reference to the Jews, interpreting generation as “race”.
 2. A reference to unbelievers. Evil unbelief will continue until the return.
 3. The generation that experiences the end-time signs. In other words, the events of vs 25-32 happen within a generation (short period of time).
- My personal view is that “this generation” refers back to the disciples and description of Jerusalem. In other words, within a generation (40 years)—Jesus’s prediction will take place. They got their “when” question answered.

Apply: Think about how this would fortify trust in the sufficiency of Christ’s Words (v33). Jesus Christ wants us to trust his Word completely, without any doubt.

Christ’s Word is enough.

Lesson #3 Be constantly watchful and stay spiritually awake (v33,36)

- The third and final lesson is the most weighty. It’s where the main application is for all believers across times.

- It's boiled down in the simple lesson to *watch* and *stay awake*.

Watch yourselves & stay awake —so that (lest) you become spiritually slothful and ultimately useless (weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and cares of this life).

- Avoid falling into the trap of being spiritually dull.
- It can literally mean getting drunk. But also it can be throwing life away in front of a screen, or letting the things we own, own us.

Sum/Conclusion: Last Things according to Jesus comes down to one word: readiness. Be ready. Are you ready for Jesus to return at any moment?

We don't prepare for the end by forecasting, but faithfully following Jesus.

Being ready is:

+Avoiding false teaching and paralyzing fear

+Bearing witness, even if persecution (looking for a few Bob moments)

**If you actively share the gospel with unbelievers and see urgency in it, you've got eschatology figured out. You know life is short and Jesus will come back as Savior and Judge.*

+Being ready is being watchful and staying awake. God help us.