

“Your Redemption Is Drawing Near”: Jesus’ Words on the End of the World (Part 2)

Introduction

The Text

⁵ And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, ⁶ “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” ⁷ And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” ⁸ And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. ⁹ And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”

¹⁰ Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹² But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. ¹³ This will be your opportunity to bear witness. ¹⁴ Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, ¹⁵ for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷ You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your lives. (Luke 21:5-19)

The End of the World?!

A. I mentioned last time that due to the “unprecedented” nature of 2020 I have heard, as I’m sure you have as well, many wondering about end of the world and the return of Christ and things.

1. When will it be? What will it look like? Are we in it now?

B. And, well, if this is where’re at, I dare say we’ve come to the right place in Luke’s gospel to try to make sense of things. Because this entire chapter essentially serves as Jesus’ long, complex, and at times quite confusing answer to His disciples’ own questions on the matter.

1. Jesus has just spoken about the destruction of the temple. They assume such a tragedy must mean the end of the world. So they ask, v. 7: “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” Or as it’s put in Matthew’s account: “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3).

- a. That's what they want to know—the **when** and the **what** regarding both the destruction of the temple and the end of the world! And so, again, it's this question that sets up everything that follows.
- C. Last week we only began to dip our toes into these verses, and I said we'd really be working at this for some four to five weeks in total. And this morning we proceed with Part 2.
- 1. The first took us from **vv. 5-9**. Now we shall take a closer look at **vv. 10-19**.

Prophetic Telescoping

- A. Now, before we really get going for this morning, I did feel it might be important again to fill out a bit more what I said last time concerning the way Jesus is answering things here and what His words are actually referring to.
- 1. You should know that there are some who look at Jesus' words here in this chapter and think He is only referring to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by Rome in 70 AD.
 - a. In this view, His words therefore aren't really all that applicable to us at all. He's speaking to His disciples here and telling them of what's coming in the relatively near future.
 - 2. Others are inclined to see He really must only be speaking about the what's coming at the end of the age, He has a distant future fulfillment in mind, and nothing more.
- B. One of the reasons commentators feel pressed into one or the other, either a near fulfillment or a distant future fulfillment is based on what Jesus says down in **v. 32**: "**Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.**"
- 1. Admittedly, this is a bit confusing, right? What does He mean by "**this generation**"?
 - a. If we take it to mean His own generation—the generation of these disciples, well then it must refer only to the events in 70 AD, or else Jesus is sadly mistaken about His second coming and the end of the world—and many scholars have, sadly, claimed this to be the case.
 - b. But others have said "**this generation**" must refer to the generation that is beginning to see the particular signs mentioned before it as markers of the end of the world. In other words, when it really starts to happen, it will happen within the lifetime of that generation. So, they say, Jesus is talking about a yet future generation.
- C. But the hermeneutical riddle is solved when once we remember what I shared last time, namely that Jesus is here actually speaking of both the near future event and distant future event in overlapping and interweaving ways.
- 1. He has in mind here both the destruction of the temple in 70 AD (as is most plain from **vv. 20-24**) and His second coming at the end of the age (as is most plain from **vv. 25-28**).

D. Here we have a classic example of what we might call prophetic telescoping. The two events are telescoped together. To us they may look and sound like one event, but as things unfold, we come to find they are two or more distinct and yet related events.

1. In this case, the one is a type, pattern, or foreshadow of the other. What's going to happen in Jerusalem in 70 AD is a picture of what's coming for the whole world at the end of the age.

E. I think NT scholar Mark Strauss sums it up nicely for us: “[T]he destruction of the temple in AD 70 served as a typological preview of the judgments associated with the coming of the Son of Man and the end of the age. As is so often the case with Old Testament prophecies, the two events are telescoped together because both are eschatological, relating to God’s final salvation and judgment. Jesus’ first coming accomplished salvation; his second will consummate it. The destruction of Jerusalem serves as temporal judgment in history, a preview of the final judgment. ‘This generation’ could then be a double reference, both to the Jews of Jesus’ generation and to the final generation which will see the coming of the Son of Man” (Four Portraits, One Jesus, 191).

1. I think he’s exactly right. Telescoping, typological preview. This is what we see here.

- a. And, as He says, it’s a regular feature of Old and New Testament prophecy. This is why we speak of things such as double fulfillment and also of this idea of the already and the not-yet—that things have already been inaugurated and yet not fully consummated.

- i. So there’s this confusion when it comes to biblical prophecy—has it happened, has it not? And sometimes the answer is simply: Yes! There’s something that’s already begun, something that’s pictured or whatever, and yet the fullness isn’t quite here yet.

F. To give you one other example of this, we’ve already seen the sort of thing at play in Luke’s gospel.

1. When Jesus first rolled up into that synagogue there in Nazareth back in [Luke 4](#), He opens the scroll, reads from [Isa 61](#) about the Messianic Servant who’s anointed by the Spirit and is going to proclaim good news to the poor and set the people free ([vv. 1-2a](#)) and He sits down and says: “[Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing](#)” ([v. 21](#)).

2. But, you see, Jesus pulled up short on that prophecy, because the next line talks about the day of God’s vengeance. And He doesn’t go there because that’s not what He’s come to do at first. “[I did not come to judge the world but to save the world](#)” ([John 12:47](#)).

3. But He will come to the judge world in the end. It’s prophetic telescoping. The fulfillment’s begun in His first coming, but it will only be fully realized in His second. But when you read the text in Isaiah it looks like one event.

- a. Which is why, by the way, you have guys as prominent as John the Baptist confused by what Jesus is doing and asking: “[Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?](#)” ([Luke 7:19](#)). “If You are the one, why am I locked up here in Herod’s dungeon? What happened to the day of vengeance and vindication for your people?!” He didn’t get it. He missed the telescopic element.

G. And we don't want to miss that as we move on in this text. Jesus is talking about both something near and far, something that pertains immediately to these disciples in their day, and something that very much applies to us in ours. We best keep this in mind as we go along.

1. As we focus in now on [vv. 10-19](#), I've got two things for us: (1) A World Unraveling and Undone ([vv. 10-11](#)); and (2) A Life Lost and Found ([vv. 12-19](#)). Let's go!

(1) A World Unraveling and Undone (vv. 10-11)

A. Look at [vv. 10-11](#) again: “¹⁰ Then he said to them, ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.’”

B. Bottom line here, according to Jesus, there is going to be great chaos.

1. There's an unraveling in the political realm as [nation](#) is against nation and [kingdom](#) is against kingdom.
2. There's an unraveling in the natural realm, where it will seem even the created order is threatening to rip apart—so He speaks of [earthquakes](#) and [famines](#) and [pestilences](#).
3. And then in the latter part of [v. 11](#) there Jesus knowingly leverages apocalyptic language “[there will be terrors and great signs from heaven](#)”—He's signaling the cosmic dimension of this chaos.

C. Now, thinking again of prophetic telescoping, we know that Jesus is speaking here, in some sense at least, of what would happen in a more localized and micro-level way in and around Jerusalem in 70 AD. And when you open our history books, interestingly enough, this is precisely what we find.

1. Reflecting back up to [v. 9](#) where Jesus similarly says there will be “[wars and tumults](#)” one commentator writes: “‘[Wars and \[tumults\]](#)’ could summarize many ages, but they pertain especially well to the first Christian generation. Josephus uses a phrase very similar to [v. 9](#) to describe the rumors of war circulating when Caligula (Roman emperor, 37–41) attempted to erect a statue of himself in the temple of Jerusalem (J.W. 2.187). Those rumors turned out to be only that, but twenty-five years later, in 66, total war broke out when the Zealots plunged Palestine into a catastrophic war with Rome. The language of [v. 9](#) finds striking parallels in Tacitus's description particularly of the last years of Nero's megalomania and the civil wars that followed his suicide in 68” (PNTC).
2. Tacitus, you may recall is the renowned and much respected Roman historian from the 1st century AD). In his Histories he describes this time period as follows: “[The history on which I am entering is that of a period rich in disasters, terrible in battles, torn by civil struggles, horrible even in peace. Four emperors fell by the sword; there were three civil wars, more foreign wars, and often both at the same time](#)” (Hist. 1.2 [LCL]). And he goes on to describe in elaborate detail the great disturbance of those days.

- a. It all sounds like the sort of thing Jesus is referring to here, does it not? Nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom. Turmoil everywhere you looked.

- D. And yet again, interestingly enough, this is still relatively localized, on a micro-level, a mere typological preview of what is coming universally and on a macro-scale at the end of the age.
1. Life in a fallen world is hard. And it's only going to get harder. I think that's the point. Don't you feel that? Things are breaking down.
- E. You know you might think of it like this. Just as when you get sick, your body finds ways of telling you—you have symptoms, warning signs, a sore throat, a runny nose, aches, fevers, etc.—so too this world is displaying these symptoms of fallenness, of brokenness—symptoms alerting us to the fact that something's gone awry.
1. And the more severe the symptoms get the more severe we understand the illness to be. The cancer has progressed, so to speak. It's nearing the end. God's creation and the whole created order is unraveling and coming undone . . . before, of course, it will be, at last, gloriously remade and restored in Jesus!

(2) A Life Lost and Found (vv. 12-19)

“But Before All This . . .”

- A. In v. 12 now it's as if Christ backs things up a bit. It seems as if He almost got a little carried away there and skipped over just one minor detail. So He returns to deal with it now. And it very well may be the most painful detail, or symptom we could say, of all. He talks in these verses about persecution, both systemic and intimate.
1. Let's read His words once more: “¹² But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³ This will be your opportunity to bear witness. ¹⁴ Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, ¹⁵ for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷ You will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your lives.”
 - a. Let me say a few words about this in general and then we shall get a bit more pointed and practical with it . . .
- B. For one thing, let's make sure we at least see what it is that's happening here. The chaos, the unraveling we just discussed in the previous verses, here gets deeply personal. It's not just out there somewhere, it's going to rip and tear at our own lives as well.
1. So He talks first of being delivered up to the **synagogues** and **prisons**, and how they'll have to give account to **kings** and **governors**.
 - a. The idea here is that both the Jew and the Gentile, both the religious and the secular, will stand opposed to the kingdom and cause of Christ. It's as if you will not

be able to find a safe space. You run into the synagogue where there should be worship and instead you find warfare. You're dragged before the magistrates where there should be justice and instead you find oppression.

2. So what do you do? Well you run back home to your family where at least there you should expect to find security and deep bonds of affection, but instead, even here, you find rejection, betrayal, abandonment, hatred. This is the sort of thing that stings the most. [Parents, brothers, relatives, friends](#) . . . closest of kin at enmity with you because of your association with Jesus.
 3. Jew, Gentile, family, friend. Jesus says: "I think you're getting the point. Let's just go ahead and say it: '[You will be hated by all for my name's sake](#)'" (v. 17).
- C. And pulling back out our telescope, we watch this play out in the early church in the time around 70 AD, do we not?
1. The book of [Acts](#) is just one big riff on this theme of opposition and persecution. Sit down some time this next week and just read through it. Make note of how many times these early Christians are dragged before the Jewish or Gentile leaders, how many times they're thrown out of synagogues or thrown into prisons, how many times they're chased out of town or even killed.
 - a. This is why Tacitus, again, refers to Christians at this time as "[a class of persons who were loathed, ... hated by the human race](#)" (Ann. 15:44).
- D. And, again, we're told, as far as the end of the age is concerned, it's only going to get worse.
1. So Jesus says in [Matt 24:12](#): "[In the last days] because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold."
 2. And Paul, in [2 Thess 2](#) instructs to be on the lookout for what he calls "[the rebellion](#)" (v. 3) which must precede the Lord's coming.
 3. And, likewise, later in [1 Tim 4:1](#) he writes of how "[the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons . . .](#)"
 4. Which reminds us of [Rev 12](#) where John sees in a vision of how the devil was thrown down at the cross and he knows his time is short so he's off to "[make war](#)" (v. 17) on the saints for as long as he can. He may not be able to keep you from glory, but he can and will hurt you along the way.
- E. Some look at what the Scriptures say about the end-times and they anticipate things slowly getting better until the end. Others anticipate things only getting worse.
1. I think the Scriptures teach that both kingdom triumph and earthly trial will be intensified as we approach the end. The conflict doesn't mellow in any way. It only heats up.
 - a. The church will make great advancements, but not without great opposition and loss.

Who Would Sign up for This?!

- A. So let's get real, let's get practical. Who would sign up for this? They're all going to hate you. You will suffer. You could die. Would you put your name on that line, if you knew this was coming?
1. Listen, when you get who Jesus is and what He's done in love for you, you would. Even if it means letting go of everything else . . . you would!
- B. You know, there's that verse, I talk about it often, you've probably heard it before, where Jesus says to His disciples on another occasion: "[W]hoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Luke 9:24).
1. It sounds like a cute, pithy little saying in isolation, but I think what we have before us this morning in [Luke 21](#) really gives that verse some teeth. You see it. What it means. You're going to lose your life for His sake. But, take heart, therein you will find it!
- C. Let me show you three things you're going to have to lose, to let go of, to release, if you're truly going to find your life in Jesus. They're all right here in the text, I'll just bring them out for quick reflection and application.

Release #1: People-pleasing

- A. This is a hard one, right? We want people to like us, to approve of us, to be impressed by us.
1. For so many we build our identity around what others are thinking and saying of us. It's hard to know even where I end and their thoughts of me begin, because it just feels like the two are interwoven so tightly.
- B. And you've got to know, if this is hard for us, it was certainly just as hard, probably more so back in the day with these disciples. The Jews at this time, like so many in the ancient world, rooted their personal identity in the larger social group—the household, the family, the clan, the tribe—more than in the individual.
1. And here Jesus is saying not just some of them are going to be moderately displeased with you, but they're all going to disown you. They're not going to like my message about sin and repentance and faith and salvation—it's good news, you and I know that, but it won't sound good to them. And they'll hate you for it.
- C. Now I know many of us have great families and friends and things. And we're not yet, thankfully, experiencing the harshness of Jesus' words. And maybe we won't. But what if it came to this? What would you do? Is your mind made up?
- D. Listen, if your life is built around pleasing people you cannot be an effective witness for Jesus. You can't. That's what He's saying.
1. To be clear, I think we all struggle with this. For goodness sake, if you're worried you're alone in this, just consider the apostle Peter. He couldn't stand up to a servant girl on the night of Jesus' betrayal. And he buckled again to the Judaizers sometime later. It's hard.

- E. But the only way I know to truly make a break from that attachment we have to people's opinions and approval is to let your heart and identity settle into what God has to say about you in Jesus. You may be losing the approval and affection of man but you have the approval and affection of God. When you get His love for you, it doesn't matter what others think.
1. I thought about that woman at Jesus' feet wiping them with her tears and her hair. She knows she's in a room with a bunch of uppity religious folks. It's a dinner party for the some of the elite. She knows she wasn't invited. She knows she doesn't belong there. She's knows they don't approve of her. But she doesn't care! She doesn't care what they're saying about her. "Eww, gross! If this guy's a prophet why is He letting a woman like her anywhere near Him!?"
 - a. She doesn't care what they're saying about her because she know what He's saying about her, don't you see? It snaps that attachment to people's approval. "Have I lived a messed up broken life? Yes. But in Jesus I'm forgiven. I'm loved. I'm washed. I'm new." You're done with people-pleasing, you're free to be real and tell others about the One who saved you.

Release #2: Self-reliance

- A. Jesus says: "Listen, you're going to be brought before kings. It's going to be crazy and frightening, no doubt. But here's what I want you to do: '¹⁴ [Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer,](#) ¹⁵ [for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict'](#) (vv. 14-15)."
1. He essentially says: "Though in those desperate moments you're going to want to rely on yourself—your cunning, your planning, your wisdom, your strength—to escape the trial, I want you to rely only on Me. I've got you. I'll get you through."
- B. Now, to be clear, I don't think Jesus is saying don't prepare for stuff in your life, or that it's a sin for me to study before I preach sermons, or for us to do evangelism training or things like this. But I do think He's getting at a couple things.
1. For one, He's getting at this issue of our fundamental allegiances. When your life is in danger, your true colors come out. What you are really trusting in becomes plain. Is it Jesus or self? He's saying: "Throw all your chips in on Me."
 2. But the second thing here (and this is beautiful), I think He's speaking of the special grace that God will make available to us in suffering times. You might not think now you've got what it takes to stand boldly, but when you need the grace to do that, it'll be there. The money will be in the account when the bill comes due. That's it!
- C. What's even more amazing (and I'll just throw this in for free) is that, in our text, Jesus mentions that He personally is going to give us "[a mouth and wisdom](#)" (v 15). He's going to help.
1. But, interestingly, back in [Luke 12](#), when He's talking about the same sorts of circumstances, He says it's "[the Holy Spirit \[who\] will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say](#)" (v.

12). And I love that. It's just one of many not so subtle hints we get throughout the NT that Jesus is God.

a. But here's where I'm going with this: In times of trial and hardship, you don't just have Jesus, that would be enough, but the idea here really is that the whole trinity is coming in to protect and provide for you. Before you're ever surrounded by these bloodthirsty opponents, you are already surrounded by your loving and almighty God—Father, Son, and Spirit. That's the idea!

i. As David says when was fleeing from Absalom: “¹ O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; ² many are saying of my soul, “There is no salvation for him in God.” ³ But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. ⁴ I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. ⁵ I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶ I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around” (Psa. 3:1–6).

D. The enemy may be closing in, but God is closer still! You give up self-reliance. But you gain God and His ever-present help in your time of need.

Release #3: Life-preservation

A. You know it seems we would do almost anything to preserve our lives, our comfort, our security, our rights, especially as Americans.

1. And here Jesus is just saying: “Lay it down, lay it all down. Stop pursuing the American dream, it's too small for my children. It's not worthy of my saints. I've created and redeemed you for so much more than health, wealth, and a life of ease!

a. You know the cross you're always singing about. Take it up. Put it on your own back. And hit the streets. Just as I've laid My life down in love for you, go now and lay your life down in love for others. That's the dream. Not preserving your life at all costs, but spending your life for the advance of the gospel whatever the cost.

i. You're going to be hated. You're going to suffer. You may even get killed. But I'm telling you, if you lose your life for my sake you will find it!”

B. Two things I want to bring out on this, real quick, and we'll close. I'll sum each with a key word . . .

WORD #1: OPPORTUNITY

A. Oh that we'd get Jesus' perspective on this! Do you see it? He tells these guys how hard life is going to get for them, that they're going to be hated, persecuted, and delivered up to the authorities and things.

1. And then He just turns to them and says, you can imagine, almost with a sparkle in His eye: “This will be your opportunity to bear witness” (v. 13).

- a. Did you hear that?! What we call tragedy, Jesus calls opportunity.
- B. You got any tragedies in your life right now? Jesus is giving you a platform . . . upon which you can bear witness to the watching world of a God who is greater than any hardship and more satisfying than anything we may lose along the way. Hardship doesn't inhibit witness, it enhances it.
- 1. We forget that "to bear witness" is in the Greek **martureō** where we get our English "martyr" from.
 - a. Suffering is part of the package. You're not just talking about the love of God for His enemies. Anyone can talk. You're showing that same love to your own enemies. As you give your back to be beaten, your cheek to be struck.
- C. What we call tragedy, Jesus calls opportunity.
- 1. Oh don't you think of Paul and Silas in that Philippian jail cell, singing to God, ministering to the jailer and the other inmates?! They sit down and sulk. They didn't bemoan their bad luck. They took the opportunity to bear witness, and people got saved.

WORD #2: VICTORY

- A. It's crazy to talk about dying at the hands of your persecutors and victory at the same time, but that's what Jesus ultimately does. That's the meaning of Jesus' words there at the end: " ¹⁶You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish" (vv. 16-18).
- B. That's one of my favorite verses in all the Bible.
- 1. And, to be clear, it's not because Jesus seems to be promising me here that I won't go bald. (I wish that were the case, but by all accounts it's not looking like I'm heading in a good direction.)
 - 2. No, this is one of my favorite verses in the Bible because it speaks to the utter inability of the devil to orchestrate my demise and the overwhelming triumph of God over all things for my good.
 - a. Do you see that? What is the worst thing that could happen to you if you go all out for Jesus? Someone could lop off your head.
 - i. But what's happened? All you've done is catapulted me to glory and in Jesus someday soon God is going raise up my dead body and, you know what, to the dismay of my enemies, I'm going to have a full head of hair!
- C. You get what He's saying, don't you? Don't be afraid of going all out for Jesus. Even their worst can't touch you. Don't run from risk and sacrifice for a life of ease and comfort. Stop trying so hard to preserve your life. Spend yourself. Lose your life for His sake and you'll find it.

1. Listen, if we're living in the end of days, that's how we want to be going out!