

LUKE 21:5-38 – SIGNS OF THE END

Getting the big picture of the chapter

1. What question is Jesus dealing with in this chapter (verses 5-7)?
2. a) Read verses 8-28, and make a summary list of all the events Jesus mentions will happen. (Don't go into detail – if you have questions, note them down to discuss or research later).

Probably the main difficulty in interpreting this chapter is understanding verse 32 – this generation will not pass away until all these things happen.

What do you think of these approaches taken to understanding this:

- a) Jesus thought he would return in the lifetime of his disciples, but he was wrong.
 - b) The word 'generation' can also mean 'race' or 'type of people' (see the NIV footnote). So it could be saying that either the Jewish people will not pass away, or that rebels will not pass away, until all these things happen.
 - c) Jesus is referring to the original question about the timing of the temple destruction. He is saying that the temple destruction will happen in the lifetime of the disciples.
3. Option (c) is the approach taken in the sermon. But what further event does the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 point us to (verse 25-28)?

Re-read verses 8-19

These events happened in the lead-up to the destruction of the earthly 'kingdom' of Israel, but they also continue to happen as we await the return of Christ.

4. What instructions does Jesus give in verses 8 and 9 about dealing with signs of the end?

5. What instructions does Jesus give to those suffering persecution (verses 12-19)?
6. Given that verse 16 says that some will be killed for Christ, how do we make sense of Jesus' promises in verses 18-19?
7. In what ways have you seen these signs in your own lifetime?

Read 20-24.

8. What instructions does Jesus give the early Christians for the time when the Romans attacked Jerusalem (AD 66-70)?
9. Why did God let Jerusalem be destroyed? See also Luke 19:41-44.

Read 25-36

10. These verses seem to look beyond AD70. The language used here is apocalyptic (vivid picture language used describe almost indescribable events and realities). Compare with Daniel 7:13-14 and Revelation 1:5-7. What is the climax of this event?
11. How will people in general respond to the events of the last days? How should Christians respond?
12. What final warning do verses 34-36 give us as we await Jesus' return? What is something that you could remind yourself of this week?

Spend some time praying for those who are not yet ready for the return of the Son of Man, and/or those 'weighed down by the anxieties of life.'

Comments for Bible study leaders

This is a difficult passage, and I have included more comments than usual. Most evangelicals would recognise the double layer of fulfilment here, which is common in OT prophecies also. Jesus speaks of the end of Jerusalem, and also the end of the world, at his return.

The destruction of Jerusalem may not seem particularly significant to us. It is not actually recorded in Scripture. But it is significant because it shows that God's kingdom is not ultimately an earthly one, as it was in the time of David and Solomon.

The issue of 'times of the gentiles' (24) has not been addressed in this study. Without extensive research, my understanding is that it is linked to Mark's statement (Mk 13:10) that the Gospel must first be preached before the end comes. It does suggest that there is a period of restoration for Jews (Rom 11:25-26) before Jesus returns. But I also think that this is already happening, for there are Jews turning to Christ.

It might be worth noting that we ought to be wary of those who seek to give more detail about end-time events than Jesus does!