

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are
Most Surely Believed Among Us
An Expository Study of The Gospel According to Luke
Chapter 21- Luke 21:5- 38
322- When Therefore Will These Things Happen?-
Part 8- The Promise of Judgment- Part 6

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Luke 21:5-38

5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,

6 *"As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."*

7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?"

8 And He said, *"See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.*

9 *"When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately."*

10 Then He continued by saying to them, *"Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom,*

11 *and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.*

12 *"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.*

13 *"It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.*

14 *"So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;*

15 *for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.*

16 *"But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,*

17 and you will be hated by all because of My name.
18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish.
19 "By your endurance you will gain your lives.
20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.
21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;
22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.
23 "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;
24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,
26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
27 "Then they will see *THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD* with power and great glory.
28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."
29 Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees;
30 as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.
31 "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.
32 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.
33 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.
34 "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;
35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

36 "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

37 Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet.

38 And all the people would get up early in the morning *to come* to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

To the Glory of God

On October 22, 1844, as many as 100,000 people gathered on hillsides, in meeting places, and in meadows. They were breathlessly and joyously expecting the return of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The crowds had assembled because of the prophetic claim of an upstate New York farmer and Baptist layman named William Miller. Miller was certain from his studies of the Bible that Jesus Christ was going to return on that day.

The prophesied Return date had arrived. The waiting crowds gathered at various places, mainly throughout the Northeast United States, and looked expectantly upward as the hours slipped away. Anxiety grew as nightfall descended. Then the midnight hour tolled and still Christ had not returned. People became ever more restless. Through the wee hours of darkness, the dejected and stunned crowds began to disperse. When the daylight of Oct. 23 arrived, it became clear that they had been wrong.¹

This dashed hope came to be known to future generations of Jehovah's Witnesses as "The Great Disappointment." And in his book, *"When Time Shall Be No More"*, historian Paul Boyer offered an example of the deep despondency suffered by the followers of Miller. In the words of one tragically disappointed believer:

"Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before.... We wept, and wept, till the day dawned" (page 81).

Now for 2,000 uninterrupted years, the Christian Church has believed and taught, as a primary Doctrine, that Jesus Christ is

¹ www.gci.org/history/disappointment

literally, physically, and bodily coming back to this earth. The Second Coming of Jesus is one of those Teachings that have *always* been taught. For example, the earliest Christian Creed that dates back to early in the second Century, known today as “The Apostles Creed”, which incidentally was *not* written by the Apostles, says in part:

The third day He (Jesus) rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right Hand of God the Father Almighty.
From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

Now the reason that this is significant is because this Creed was used for many centuries at the public profession service for new converts. The leaders of the Church back then gave newly saved people 40 days after their conversion to fast and ponder what they had done, to take inventory of their lives, repent of any known sin, and make restitution toward anyone they had defrauded before they were baptized.

And these new converts *memorized* this Creed which was a summary statement of what the sacred Scriptures taught and what the people of the Christian Church believed. And as they pondered the various components of this Creed, they were to ask questions about anything they didn't understand.

So, after 40 days of fasting and preparation, the new converts were asked a series of questions about what they believed and what they were trusting in and what they were hoping in, and part of that public ceremony was that they would recite this Creed, which *included* the part about the Second Coming of Jesus. Then they were baptized by immersion and were formally and officially accepted into the fellowship of the Church.

So, from the earliest records that we have, the issue of the Second Coming of Jesus was considered to be so important that no one could be a part of the Christian Church who did not confess it.

But, even though the Scriptures are clear about this, various groups throughout history have tried to “spiritualize” the Second Coming” to say that Jesus is “returning” only in the sense of “ruling” and “reigning” in our hearts.

Some heretical groups taught that when the Emperor Constantine made the claim to being saved, and, almost overnight, Christianity

went from being an *illegal* and *persecuted* religion to the de-facto State sponsored religion of the Roman Empire, that *that* was the Second Coming of Christ.

So, because there is some controversy concerning this event, and because I have been preaching through **Luke 21** every Lord's Day Morning for quite some time now, and because I am teaching Eschatology in the Evening Bible Study, I want to make my position crystal clear:

- ✓ Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth at an undisclosed point of time in the future.
- ✓ He will return literally and in a body.

And Jesus is coming back for several reasons:

- ✓ To present to Himself the crowning achievement of all that He said and did, a glorious Church, that is without spot or blemish.
- ✓ To judge all sin by judging all unrepentant sinners.
- ✓ To reward all repentant sinners.
- ✓ To end the era of Human Government.

... and, therefore, we should live our lives accordingl- with complete *abandon* to the radical Gospel of Love in Jesus Christ.

And, it is on that last issue where I differ with many in the modern Church. All my life, I have heard people say that they believe that Jesus is coming back. And many of them agree that He could come back at any moment. But as you follow these people around, the way they live their lives is in contradiction to what they say they believe.

Over the last 45 years I have been in thousands of Prayer Meetings, and yet I can count the issue of Jesus coming back being prayed about on both hands. Jesus coming back and ending our entire way of life is simply *not* at the forefront of most people's minds that make up the modern Church.

They would rather pray about politics and physical healing and financial and material blessings and Aunt Bessie's lumbago and Uncle Bob's back surgery. And I'm not saying that we should never pray about what is bothering us down here, we should. But *only* in

proportion to the many other things that Jesus and the Apostles taught us to pray about, that mostly involve things like:

- ✓ Overcoming Temptation
- ✓ Being faithful, fruitful, and busy in the Work of the Lord
- ✓ Not being worldly
- ✓ Not loving money
- ✓ Not growing weak and lukewarm
- ✓ Forgiving those who wrong us
- ✓ God's Will being carried out
- ✓ Tending to widows and orphans
- ✓ Not letting the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes and the boastful pride of life overwhelm us until the Word of God has no effect on us anymore.

The prayer requests of many today are all about the "here and now", because that makes up the bulk of what they sing about and the bulk of what they are being taught. And I think that is a tragic mistake.

For example, the Scriptures teach very clearly that, as believers, we should be praying for the Second Coming. Jesus told the Apostle John in **The Revelation 22:20b**:

... Yes, I am coming quickly...

... and John responded by praying:

The Revelation 22:20c

... Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

So John did *not* take the position that is so common today that Jesus is coming back when He gets ready and we don't need to be concerned about it. No, Jesus told John what God's Will was regarding His Return, and that prompted John to pray what was the Will of God. The other Apostles wrote in such a way that any honest reader can determine that they were *eagerly* waiting for Jesus to come back.

Another area about the Second Coming that I think is in short supply these days is the faithfulness to which people are preaching and

teaching the Gospel, and compelling lost sinners to hurry up and repent and be saved. The Apostles believed that Jesus could come back at any second. And so they lived their lives accordingly. Far too many today believe that things are going to continue just like they are now, and so they live their lives accordingly. As a result, the modern Church has become far too worldly and far too concerned about the affairs of this life, to the expense of what Jesus promised is coming.

But, you cannot honestly read through the New Testament Epistles and not come away with the thought that these men passionately believed that Jesus was coming back, and also that His Return was *imminent*. And it was their belief that Jesus could come back at any moment, that gave them such boldness.

The people of the early Church were not afraid to commit to Jesus. Nobody in the early Church griped or complained about deep and serious sermons or long prayer meetings or the rugged path of holiness. They lived well, they suffered well, without complaint, and they died well, to God's Glory. And the reason they didn't have a problem with full and unreserved subservience to Jesus was because they were perfectly willing to die for Him.

And so, the great fear of believers back then was not on how hard it was to serve the Lord, or how much they had to give up, or what the evil people might do to them. It was that Jesus might come back and find them sleeping.

Another indisputable fact of Scripture is that the believing Jews under the Old Covenant didn't simply *pray* that the Messiah would come, they, also, *fasted* for Him to come. They not only cried out to God for Messiah to come, but they emphasized their prayers by fasting. Dr. Luke introduced us to two old people, early on, Simeon and Anna, who spent their lives crying out to God and fasting for the Messiah to come. And they were not disappointed; they both were privileged to see Him as an eight-day old Child.

So, in spite of what so many say, I'm not convinced that most people are actually looking for Jesus to come back at all, or that they even *want* Him to return. When you see worldliness and covetousness and a love for money abounding in the people of the Church, when people who lay claim to being saved have no burden to pray or study the Bible or fellowship with other godly believers, when the leaders of the Church are spending three days a week on the golf course, when they

are terrified of making the very same demands on the people that Jesus makes, when fathers are not leading their families spiritually, when politics and entertainment dominant the landscape of the Church, when the Second Coming is no longer a large part of both their prayers *and* their fasting, when you see things like this, then you know for sure that not only do these people not believe that Jesus might come back at any minute, but I'm not sure that they believe that He is coming back at all!

So as we go through this passage in **Luke 21**, you need to keep in mind that there is *nothing* that I am teaching or preaching that should make anybody think that I don't believe in the Second Coming. I believe in it more than most, and my life reflects that.

But, the fact of the matter is that **Luke 21** has nothing to do with the Second Coming. **Luke 21** is very *narrowly* a Prophecy that Jesus gives about bringing an end to the First Covenant, and what all is going to come about to make that happen. And we have been in this for several weeks, and I think I'll have about two more sermons on this before we go into Chapter 22. Lord willing, next Lord's Day, we will look at the Parable that Jesus gave in verses 29-33, and then the following week, we will look at the final two warnings that Jesus gave in verses 34&36 when He said:

34 "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;

36 But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

But today, we want to look at the section that has to do with Jesus's Words in verses 25-28- so let's read those verses again together:

Luke 21:25-28

25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,

26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

27 "Then they will see *THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD* with power and great glory.

28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Now, it is clear that Jesus followed the same style of teaching here that was common among the Jewish rabbis. For example, we know from history that His Sermons were probably around 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 hours long. And we know that preaching like that was common until the dawn of the 20th Century. We also know that Jesus didn't preach a sermon just one time, but that He repeated some or all of what He said *many* times.

And so what we have in the Gospel Records are segments of the whole, which is why some teachings of Jesus in some Gospel Records differ from others. It isn't that there are contradictions, but that all the Biblical writers were not moved upon by God the Holy Spirit to always put in the same items. So, for example, what we have here in **Luke 21** are the segments that God the Spirit wanted Luke to record for us.

And one of the elements that we have to deal with when trying to understand what Jesus meant by what He said is the issue that was common among Jewish teachers called:

Hebraic Apocalyptic Hyperbole

... or sometimes referred to as: *Jewish Poetic Hyperbole* or *Jewish Apocalyptic Poetry*.

This is the style of writing that was common among Jewish writers, *especially* in the Old Testament. And to get a glimpse of this style of writing, I want you to turn with me to **Psalms 18**. Now, right off "jump street", we need to see who wrote this Psalm and why. And the Biblical heading gives us both answers when it says:

For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord, who spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said,

Now unlike the headings in your Bible that were put there by the publishers, this heading is inspired. And so as **Psalms 18** is read and studied, this heading should be included.

So from this we know several things:

- ✓ David wrote this Psalm
- ✓ It was a *song* that David *spoke* to God
- ✓ It was concerning God delivering David from the hand of Saul and his other enemies

Now look at verses 1-3:

Psalm 18:1-3

1 "I love You, O Lord, my strength."

2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

3 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies.

Now this is not hard to understand, and yet David has already introduced us to this Jewish style of writing. Notice in verse 2 how he describes God. David says that God is:

- ✓ My Rock
- ✓ My Fortress
- ✓ My Shield

Now we know that God is not a literal Rock, nor is He a literal Fortress or a Shield. David is simply using this style of writing to describe the way in which God is steadfast and unmovable, and the way in which God has graciously protected him and kept him safe. So, David is simply praising God and giving Him glory before he makes his requests.

And this is the way Jesus taught us how to pray. Jesus said to begin our prayers with magnifying God's infinite Worth rather than just start giving God a laundry list of things we want out of Him. And David does that, and then David makes his request:

Psalm 18:3&6

3 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies.

6 In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried to my God for help...

So what was David's problem? Look at verses 4-5:

Psalm 18:4-5

4 The cords of death encompassed me, And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me.

5 The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me.

So David's problem was that Saul and others were trying to kill him. Yet notice how he describes his trouble. This is an example of Hebraic Apocalyptic Hyperbole. Now look at how David said that God answered his prayers in verses 7-15:

Psalm 18:7-15

7 Then the earth shook and quaked; And the foundations of the mountains were trembling And were shaken, because He was angry.

8 Smoke went up out of His nostrils, And fire from His mouth devoured; Coals were kindled by it.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down With thick darkness under His feet.

10 He rode upon a cherub and flew; And He sped upon the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him, Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

12 From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, Hailstones and coals of fire.

13 The Lord also thundered in the heavens, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire.

14 He sent out His arrows, and scattered them, And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.

15 Then the channels of water appeared, And the foundations of the world were laid bare At Your rebuke, O Lord, At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

Now we must agree that the Bible declares that God is Spirit and does not have a natural body. And, so, God doesn't have literal "ears" or "nostrils" or a "mouth" or literal "feet". And God doesn't literally shoot arrows. All this is – is David using a Jewish style of writing that describes the Goodness of God in delivering him out from the hand of Saul and his other enemies.

Now in our 21st Century American culture, we give praise to God by simply saying:

"The Lord blessed me and answered my prayers!"

... and we usually don't go into this kind of hyperbole when talking about things like this. But the Old Testament is *filled* with examples of this, such as in **Isaiah 13**, please go there with me:

Isaiah 13:6-16

6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

7 Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt.

8 They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of *them*; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame.

9 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.

11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

14 And it will be that like a hunted gazelle, Or like sheep with none to gather *them*, They will each turn to his own people, And each one flee to his own land.

15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through, And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.

16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces Before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives ravished.

Now, at best, the context of **Isaiah 13** is describing an event that happened hundreds of years before Jesus was born that involved Babylon and the Kingdom of the Medes. And yet, in verses 6& 9- the Prophet calls this event:

... the day of the Lord...

... and equated it with God "**coming**". So this is a "coming" of God to the earth, but, in what sense? It isn't the *Second* Coming. And it really isn't even the First Coming either. Isaiah describes a "coming of God" in Judgment against unbelievers.

Isaiah 13:6b&9b

6 ... It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

9... Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

... and yet look how Isaiah describes this Judgment:

Isaiah 13:7-16

7 Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt.

8 They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of *them*; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame.

10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.

11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

14 And it will be that like a hunted gazelle, Or like sheep with none to gather *them*, They will each turn to his own people, And each one flee to his own land.

15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through, And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.

16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces Before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives ravished.

The point here is that Isaiah is using this very *same* style of writing to describe a very natural event that signifies the Judgment of God against unrepentant sinners. And notice that this Judgment involves God using pagan nations, not Himself! Also notice that Isaiah uses the very *same* terminology that both David and Jesus used to describe this Divine Judgment:

Isaiah 13:10&13

10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

... which is a perfect example of Hebraic Apocalyptic Hyperbole. There is no reason to think that the stars of heaven didn't give their light during this time or that the moon was dark. There is no historical data to confirm that when the Babylonian Empire fought against the Kingdom of the Medes that the Heavens literally trembled.

No, the reason why Isaiah used this terminology to describe this event was to underscore what was really happening. God was bringing Judgment to unrepentant sinners. And so, the language of the heavens tells us that this had a Divine origin, and was *not* simply nations going to war with other nations.

We have to understand that the unsaved pagans of the world did not then, and do not today, describe this event as being a Judgment of God against unbelievers. They simply describe the Empire of Babylon and the Kingdom of the Medes in *geo-political* terminology that completely leaves out the issue of human sinfulness, and the Sovereignty of God in raising up nations and casting them down.

So Isaiah wrote this as he was moved along by God the Holy Spirit so that God's people, both then and now, would understand that nothing *can* happen and nothing *does* happen without God either *causing* it or *allowing* it.

So the reference here of the Heavens is to tell us that even when it looks merely like the nations of the world are at war with one another,

that there is *always* a Divine Source. Even seemingly routine events such as the rising and setting of the sun have a Divine Source. For example, the tides are *not* merely controlled by the gravitational pull of the moon, but God asked Job this in **Job 38:8-11**:

8 ... *who* enclosed the sea with doors When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;

9 When I made a cloud its garment And thick darkness its swaddling band,

10 And I placed boundaries on it And set a bolt and doors,

11 And I said, 'Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop'?

The Bible was written to tell us that it is God alone Who controls the rise and fall of nations, it is God Who alone is Sovereign, it is God alone Who controls and orders and governs the Universe, and it is God alone Who will stand in Judgment of every human.

Newspapers and history books and documentaries don't say that. They merely say that on this date... this nation... did this. But, the Bible gives us insight into the invisible Hand of Providence.

So in **Luke 21:25-26**- when Jesus said:

25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,

26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

He was merely following the very *same* pattern of speech laid out by the Old Testament writers. In fact, here in **Luke 21:27**, Jesus is actually quoting from **Daniel 7**. And He is reminding the believing Jews who were standing around and listening to Him that day that what was coming was far more than Rome sending their brutal army to stop the Jewish rebellion. No, there are two things at play here, both of them cataclysmic:

1. The end of Jewish way of life (based in the Old Covenant).
2. The beginning of a new way (based in the New).

So this has a Divine Source. This was a Prophecy that would be fulfilled in just 40 short years from the day Jesus spoke it, where the Hand of God would finally and decisively end all claims that God was still moving in, by, and through the Old Covenant. This is Jesus foretelling the demise of the inferior First Covenant, not merely a Roman military struggle. God used the pagan Romans to carry out His Will.

And so Jesus uses the very *same* terminology that Isaiah and Ezekiel and Daniel and Joel and Amos all used so that everybody would know both then and now that this was not merely a natural, earthly, police action to quiet disaffected Jews.

No, God was once again sovereignly *inserting* Himself into the affairs of Man and raising up a pagan nation to do His bidding. The Puritan, Matthew Henry, said this,

“When *judgment begins at the house of God*, it will not end there; it shall be as if all the world were falling in pieces; and where can any be secure then? *The powers of heaven shall be shaken*, and then the pillars of the earth cannot but tremble. Thus shall the present Jewish policy, religion, laws, and government, be all entirely dissolved by a series of unparalleled calamities, attended with the utmost confusion.”²

We have to understand that theological arguments concerning just how Old Covenant Truth fit in with New Covenant Reality abounded immediately after the Resurrection. People did *not* make the transition from the Old Covenant to the New quickly or easily. And so even after all four Gospels were written, and even after the Biblical Gospel was filling the earth as far West as Spain and as far East as India, people simply couldn't figure out what to do with all that God had revealed to Moses in the First Covenant.

It wasn't until the writer of **Hebrews** was moved along by God the Spirit to pen down his masterpiece that we call, today, “The Epistle to the Hebrews”, just about 1-1/2 years before the destruction of the Temple, that Jewish believers had the inspired theology that allowed

² Matthew Henry; *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible; Commentary on Luke 21*; PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.

them to understand that their efforts to make the Old Covenant fit in with the New was blasphemy.

That writer said that Jesus was *superior* to angels, and that Moses himself worshipped Jesus. The writer of **Hebrews** wrote that not a single sin had ever been forgiven by the hundreds of thousands of animal sacrifices offered under the Covenant "of shadows and types". But, that all of our sins, even the ones we haven't even committed yet, have been washed away through the one Death of the Lamb of God!

This writer was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to say that the reason why the Levitical priests were inferior was because they were sinful, and the reason what Jesus brought about was superior was because He wasn't. This writer said that the entire system of sinful priests was overruled by a Priesthood of Someone Who had no beginning or end.

Hebrews is where we find that Christians no longer have to travel to Jerusalem once a year, but that because of what Jesus did and Who Jesus is, that we may come boldly into the Throne Room of God Himself to receive Mercy and Grace in time of need. And it is Hebrews that tells us that the reason that Jesus sat down at the Right Hand of God was *not* because He was tired, but because He was finished!

It is in **Hebrews 6** that Jewish believers were commanded to completely *abandon* the inferior Revelation of the Old Covenant and fully *embrace* the superior Revelation of Jesus Christ in the New. So we have statement after statement in the New Testament about how Jesus Christ brought in an infinitely *superior* Covenant based on infinitely *superior* Promises made by an infinitely *superior* High Priest Who offered an infinitely *superior* Sacrifice.

And yet, according to history, people still struggled with this, especially the Jews. Many Jews simply could not bring themselves to stop sacrificing animals, and to abandon the temporary and inferior elements of the Old Covenant while the Temple was left standing. And so even after all that Jesus said and did, even after all the other writers of the New Testament reasoned, up to 40 years after the Resurrection, animals were still being sacrificed, the dietary and ceremonial aspects of the Law were still being observed, the people were still bound by Temple worship, and the Levitical priesthood was still firmly in place.

And Jesus knew how hard it would be. And so, right here, Jesus is promising that God is going to mercifully and graciously help His

chosen people come to this understanding that they cannot keep what they already have, and they cannot try to hold on to something that God was finished with.

So, how was God going to do that? By violently, brutally, and savagely *eliminating* the problem. He will providentially stir up the spirit of a pagan nation to thunder down from the north and do His bidding. And these pagan sinners will decimate, not merely the Jewish rebellion, but the Temple and the city and all that it represented. Now look again at **Luke 21:27**:

Then they will see *THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD* with power and great glory.

Now why did Jesus refer to Himself as “**The Son of Man**” here? There are many titles for Jesus in the New Testament. He is the “Lord,” the “Christ” (Messiah), the “Good Shepherd,” the “Bridegroom.” He is “the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.” He is “the First and the Last.” Many titles of God the Father are given to Jesus. For example, both God the Father and Jesus are the great “I Am.” But, Jesus never used most of these titles for Himself. Others gave these titles to Him. Jesus never even used the word “Messiah” about Himself, except on one occasion when he was speaking to the Samaritan woman in **John 4:26**.

The only Biblical title that Jesus did use, and that almost exclusively, was the title “Son of Man,” which he got from **Daniel**. It is used sixty-nine times in the Synoptic Gospels and twelve times in John. And this has fascinated scholars for many centuries.

But this term was an ideal title for combining the two chief things that needed to be said about His Person:

- That Jesus was fully Man
- That at the same time, He was fully God

The truth that Jesus was fully Man is conveyed by the term itself, for the words “son of man” in Aramaic or Hebrew simply means: “man” or “a human being.” For example, if an Aramaic- or Hebrew-speaking person wanted to refer to a person as a “sinner”, it would be natural for him to speak of that one as a “son of sin.” Or similarly, if he wanted to

call a person wealthy, he might have referred to him as a "son of wealth."

So when our Lord referred to himself as a "Son of Man," He was merely calling himself a Man, so far as the *literal* meaning of the term goes. That alone is significant, for it reveals the delight the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, had in identifying with us. He *could* have used terms that stressed His Own Deity exclusively, but instead Jesus stressed His Humanity in His self-identity, while trusting that the supernatural and miraculous Acts that He performed would confirm His full Deity. It is as if He were saying, "*I am one of you, and I am happy with that identification.*"

But we simply cannot stop there. Jesus did *not* merely refer to Himself as "a" son of man, because it expressed His full Humanity. But He also referred to himself as "*the*" Son of Man, to link Himself with the "Son of Man" referred to in **Daniel 7**. **Daniel 7:13-14** says:

13 "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

... so, by using this term, Jesus was telling everybody, "*I am the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy. I am the Son of Man whom Daniel spoke.*"...which means Jesus was equating Himself with being God. So in the typical, mysterious way that God reveals Himself to human beings, the term "Son of Man" has more to do with Jesus being fully God than it does with Him being also fully human.

So, even though Daniel says in verse 13 that this is a "coming" of the Son of Man, it is *not* describing the *Second* Coming of Jesus to this earth. This is describing the moment when Jesus is "coming" before the Ancient of Days to receive His Kingdom.

So, this is simply another way of understanding that the Kingdom of God no longer belongs to the Jews, but it belongs to Jesus Christ and to all those who love Him. So, instead of spending all our time trying to understand the times and the seasons that God has only in His Mind,

we need to know that **Daniel 7** is not nearly as much about what is going to happen in the future as it is to clearly identify the One Whom Daniel said Whose Kingdom will have no end. And Jesus eliminated all doubt that He is the fulfillment of what Daniel was talking about by using this term. Now look again at **Luke 21:28**:

But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

Now, it would be perfectly understandable for the Jews who were standing around Jesus hearing Him speak that day to think that their entire world was coming to an end by all that Jesus was talking about. After all, their entire concept of God and worship, and even their daily lives, were all wrapped up in the Temple and the Old Covenant.

We need to remember that this was not merely a theological discussion here. No, Jesus is promising that cataclysmic judgment was coming in both a spiritual and a natural sense. Along with the end of the First Covenant and the destruction of the Temple, the great city of Jerusalem would be reduced to a burning heap; a vicious brutal, pagan army, that showed no mercy, will dominate the land. Basic food and supply deliveries along with the most fundamental sanitary services would be disrupted. Disease and pestilence will be all around. 1.1 million Jews will lay dead. Surely this is the end of all life.

To the Jew listening to Jesus that day, it surely seemed as though Jesus was saying that what the Assyrians and the Babylonians and the Persians and the Greeks were *not* fully able to do, that the Romans would. Even though these pagan Empires were used to bring the Jew back to repentance, they could not utterly annihilate the Jewish worship and way of life. But here, Jesus seems to be saying that Rome would. And there is no doubt in my mind that as these men heard Jesus speak these words, they were shocked beyond comprehension and stood there silent, with their mouths gaped open. *How could anything "good" possibly come from all this? How could God ever recover what these pagans are going to destroy? How could God be glorified by the Temple and the habitation of Peace itself being destroyed?* It all seemed so astonishing and terrible.

Now we also need to keep in mind that as Jesus uttered this Prophecy, He had not yet died and risen from the dead. All Jesus is

talking about here will not happen until *decades* after He has ascended into Heaven and the Church is in place. And so, in this verse, the Lord of all the earth is comforting His elect by reminding them that all this death and destruction is going to result in the glorious New Covenant being taken away from one nation and propagated around the world. This destruction would abound to many the Gospel of Salvation by Grace through Faith alone. And that out of this horrible destruction would come victory, and out of this death would come life! Matthew Henry said:

“One way or other, the kingdoms of the world shall all become his kingdom. And it will be an everlasting kingdom. His *dominion* shall not *pass away* to any successor, much less to any invader, and his kingdom is *that which shall not be destroyed*. Even the very gates of Hades itself or its infernal powers and policies, shall not prevail against it. The Church shall continue militant to the end of time, and triumphant to the endless ages of eternity.”³

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

³ Matthew Henry; *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible; Commentary on Daniel*, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc.