

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  
323- When Therefore Will These Things Happen?-  
Part 9- The Promise of Judgment- Part 7

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August 7, 2016

**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

Now we have covered quite a bit of ground in our mini-series on **Luke 21**, and I am very aware that some or even much of what I have been teaching is probably new to you. And I am certain of this, because it was new to me as well.

My background in Christianity has been much like yours. And what I have been taught about these verses, in years gone by, is probably very similar to what most of you have been taught. So, as I have gone through this Chapter, I have had my own eyes opened up a lot.

But I want to assure you of several issues:

- ✓ I am using the very *same* method on interpretation for **Luke 21** that I have used for the preceding 20 Chapters. The way I have studied this Chapter and the way I have put my sermons together is no different from the way that I have done for the last 8-1/2 years of this "journey" through **Luke**
- ✓ I really didn't have to study this Passage too hard. I have preached from this Passage many times through my 45-year pilgrimage through this life and I am very cognizant with what the prevailing sentiment is concerning what Jesus is supposedly saying here.

But, I made a promise to all of you over eight years ago when we began this "journey". And that promise was that I would do my level best to research and study and agonize over every single word of every single verse of every single chapter of this Story of Salvation. I promised you that I would go back to the original languages and that I

would conjugate the sentences and that I would analyze the verbs that Dr. Luke used.

And so, I am not “cheating”. And I’m not coasting. I am spending as much time with **Luke 21** that I did with **Luke 1**, and I am going through the very *same* effort to understand *this* Chapter that I did with that one. So while I am very able to be wrong, I am not *purposefully* trying to mislead anyone. I am doing my level best to accurately reflect what Jesus is saying here in the *context* in which He said it, and these sermons are the result of that effort. So, I don’t know how to be any more honest than that.

I also want you to know that after I exhausted all my efforts at getting to the true meaning of every verse of this Chapter, I still didn’t trust myself. And so I capped off my efforts every Saturday evening with a consultation with both living and dead Church leaders through their commentaries on this Chapter. And much to my surprise, what I have brought to you over the last several weeks concerning Jesus words here in this Passage are in line with some of the most important figures in Church history, among the dead ones are:

- ✓ Matthew Henry
- ✓ John Calvin
- ✓ Richard Baxter
- ✓ John Owen
- ✓ Charles Spurgeon
- ✓ Jonathan Edwards

So, if I am wrong, I am in very good company. But, let me also say to you that I may be wrong. That is certainly possible. But I am able to say to all of you and my precious Lord, that if I am wrong about what I have preached concerning this Chapter, I don’t know where I am wrong or how I got wrong. So, if you think I am wrong, then love me enough to show me, because I don’t *want* to be wrong. I want to be right. And I am putting forth every ounce of my strength to be right. And so, if I am wrong, then don’t tell other people, tell me, and show me.

Now today I want to deal with verses 29-33, so let’s read those verses again together:

### **Luke 21:29-33**

- 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.**

Now as I told you from the beginning, I am not trying to fit in with somebody else's theology. I'm not simply repeating what I heard somebody say. I'm not trying to impress anybody. I'm trying to understand the Bible so I may love what God said and obey it, just like I want you to love it and obey it.

God's Word is true, and when Jesus said something, He meant something very precise and something very specific. And if we could walk up and ask Jesus what He meant, that would solve the problem. But we can't. And so all we have are the *words* that Jesus used and the *context* of those words. And so analyzing the words and the context is the only way I know to understand.

And after I have done that, I have come to a conclusion that is vastly different from what I was taught and what I myself have taught others in the past. And that conclusion is this:

Jesus was *not* predicting His Second Coming here. He is prophesying the end of the Old Covenant through the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD by the Roman army.

... and one of the main reasons why I have come to that conclusion is because of what Jesus said right here in verse 32:

**Luke 21:32**

**Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.**

... and then He seems to be *emphasizing* that by the very next verse:

## **Luke 21:33**

**Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.**

And dear friends, there simply is no honest way of understanding these statements by Jesus other than their normal and natural meaning:

The generation of people who were alive on the day that Jesus made this statement will not all die off until what Jesus says in this Passage is fulfilled.

... which happened approximately 40 years after Jesus spoke these words. There is no way to project these statements by Jesus ahead 2,000 years in the future. That is *inventing* a meaning that the text doesn't allow you to have. It is *adding* to the Scriptures something we simply don't have the authority to do.

Now it would have been very easy for me to just preach what I have always been taught about what these verses mean. But I am sincerely and honestly seeking to ask and answer three questions about this Passage in Luke:

1. What did God the Holy Spirit actually say here?
2. What did God the Holy Spirit mean by what He said?
3. How can I apply the Divine Truth of this Passage to my own life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

And, at first glance, we seem to have a dilemma in trying to understand verses 32-33 in conjunction with verse 31. So let's read verse 31 again:

**So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.**

Now verse 31 *seems* to be talking about the end of the world and the establishment of the literal Kingdom of God on the earth, yet verse 32 is clearly a fixed reality in the natural life of the people hearing Jesus speak on that day. So what do we do? Well, we begin by looking at what Dr. Luke wrote at the beginning of verse 29 when he said:

## **Luke 21:29a**

### **Then He told them a parable...**

Now, up until now, Jesus was *not* speaking in a Parable. From verse 6 all the way to verse 28, Jesus is prophesying about a future event. But here in verse 29, our Lord *ends* the prophecy and begins to tell us "when" these things will occur. And instead of just saying, "*God will sovereignly stir the spirit of the Roman Government, and they will send their brutal army to thunder down from the north in 68 AD and they will reach Jerusalem by 70 AD. And these pagans will be used by God to put an end to the Old Covenant by ending the sacrificing of animals and the Levitical Priesthood and the Temple worship by destroying it all.*" Instead of saying that, Jesus gives a Parable.

Now *why* did He do that? Well, He did it so that *not* everybody would understand. Please turn to read what Jesus Himself said about this in **Matthew 13**:

### **Matthew 13:10-17**

**10** And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

**11** Jesus answered them, "**To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.**

**12** "**For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.**

**13** "**Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.**

**14** "**In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, '*YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;***

**15** ***FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'***

**16** "**But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.**

**17 "For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.**

Now this is incredible! Jesus says here that the reason *why* He spoke in Parables was so that *only* God's elect would understand and the rest would not! And as unbelievable as that sounds, Jesus then went even further to say that by doing it this way, by *purposefully excluding* the non-elect from being able to hear and understand Divine Truth about the Kingdom, that this was a *fulfillment* of Old Testament Prophecies from **Isaiah 6:9-10**, **Psalms 119:70**, and **Zechariah 7:11**.

So, here is our dilemma, the key to understanding when these things will be is wrapped up in the Parable that Jesus gave in verses 29-30, so let's read that again:

**Luke 21:29-30**

**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.**

So here, Jesus is giving us yet another agricultural example that illustrates a spiritual reality. And He did this all the time. Jesus used agricultural examples often, and so if we are going to have any understanding of what Jesus was talking about, we have to at least have a working knowledge of agriculture.

And then Jesus narrowed it down even further in verse 31:

**Luke 21:31**

**So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.**

Now it is this statement, right here in verse 31, that is used most often to justify the position that what Jesus is talking about in this entire Passage of **Luke 21** is supposed to happen at some point in *our* future. And they base that on a premise that the Kingdom of God is *not* already in force, but is yet to come.

But, on close examination, Jesus didn't fully agree. For example, in **Luke 11:20**, Jesus said:



**But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**

... and this *seems* to suggest that, at least, in *some* way, the Kingdom of God came to this earth during Jesus' Ministry. Jesus even told His disciples to preach this in **Luke 10:8-9**:

**8 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;  
9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"**

And then, in **Luke 17:20-21**, Jesus said:

**Luke 17:20b-21**

**20... The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;  
21 nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."**

... which seems to suggest that the Kingdom of God is *not* some literal, physical, and geographical entity, but is, in reality, the Glory of Jesus Christ.

Now, many people hold to the view that the Kingdom of God is "both"/ "and", in other words, the Kingdom of God is *both* something present, *and* it is also something that is coming in the future. So in that view, in *one sense*, the Kingdom of God is *already* in force, and in *another* sense, the Kingdom of God is *yet to come*. And that makes sense to me on a number of levels.

But it is inconsistent on a fundamental level to suggest that Jesus is "ruling" and "reigning" in Majesty in Heaven right now, and then turn around and suggest that Jesus is *not* "ruling" and "reigning" until He comes back. He either is ruling and reigning right now, or He isn't.

It is also inconsistent to suggest that the Kingdom of God is *only* to be understood in a *literal, physical, and geographical* sense when Jesus spoke about it so often in a *spiritual* sense.

And I think one of the most telling Parables about how we are to view the Kingdom of God is found in the "Parable of the Tares and the Wheat" found in **Matthew 13**, so let's go there for a moment:

### **Matthew 13:24-30**

**24** Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

**25** "But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.

**26** "But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.

**27** "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

**28** "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'

**29** "But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.

**30** 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'""

Now, here in verse 24, Jesus very clearly tells us that what He is talking about in verses 24-30 is about the Kingdom of Heaven. And yet this entire scenario occurs on the earth, during what we would call "The Church Age".

Now this is one of the rare parables that Jesus actually explained, so let's go down to verse 36 to find out what Jesus meant by what He said here:

### **Matthew 13:36-43**

**36** Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

**37** And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,

**38** and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*;

**39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

**40** "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.

**41 "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,**  
**42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**  
**43 "Then *THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN* in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.**

Now there are a few things we need to understand about this Parable:

- ✓ There are no tares in Heaven, so, this occurs on earth.
- ✓ Allowing the tares and wheat to grow together occurs during the "Church Age".
- ✓ Jesus uses the terms "world", "field" (verse 38), and "kingdom" (verse 41) interchangeably.
- ✓ According to verse 30, it is the tares that are removed out of the Kingdom *first*, and after that the wheat is gathered.
- ✓ It is the purging of the tares *out* of the Kingdom (the world) that allows for the Righteous to shine.

Now we simply can't be dogmatic about this, but the point I am making is that it is possible to think about the Kingdom in a "*both*"/"*and*" way and *still* be consistent with Scripture. That the Kingdom is already here in *one sense* of Jesus ruling and reigning at the Right Hand of God and making intercession for us, *assuring* that all of God's elect will be stolen away from satan and brought into the Kingdom, and the Church will be victorious on the earth. And in *another sense*, we await the finalization of the Kingdom that is to literally come in fullness at the Return of Jesus Christ.

And, if that is true, then **Luke 21:31** does *not* have to refer *only* to the physical and literal Kingdom that is *yet* to come, and can very well refer to the beginning of the Church Age which is the beginning of the Age when both the tares and wheat will grow together. So in **Luke 21:31**, when Jesus talked about the Kingdom, He could very well be talking here about the beginning of the reign of the New Covenant rather than His Second Coming, which would make more sense in context with everything else we have learned so far in **Luke 21**.

Now it is very possible that Jesus was simply giving a natural, agricultural example in this Parable that would give us insight into when these things would occur. And so when He said:

**29... "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.**

He simply meant that when those people who were standing here that day hearing Him speak begin to see the false Messiah's rise up, and when they see the increase tension between the Jews and the Romans, that they should know that it won't be long until the Temple will be destroyed, and the Old Covenant will have effectively come to an end. That is certainly possible.

But, it is also possible that Jesus meant something far deeper and far more hidden so that only the elect would hear and see and understand. But, whichever way you go, we first need to put the fig tree in context with the summer season.

First of all, in verse 29, Jesus groups two trees together:

### **... the fig tree and all the trees**

Now from the original Greek, we know that Jesus is *not* talking about anything other than *fruit trees* here. Jesus used fruit as examples of spiritual development all the time. And when He discussed the fruit trees, He was not interested in how *big* the tree was or how *tall* it was, or even in how much growth it had or how many leaves were on it. If that tree did not bear fruit, Jesus had no use for it. And so Jesus taught over and over that if a tree does not bear fruit, it is only good for fire wood.

Now, Fig trees, *especially*, in the climate of the Middle East, bear fruit twice each year, near the beginning and toward the end. But the fruit at the *beginning* of the year, however, is based on the leaves of the *previous* year and is usually weak and inferior. It is the fruit that is born in September through November that is the choice fruit, because it comes forth from the *summer* leaves.

Now Jesus is not talking about fruit, per-se, here. He is talking about the connection between the fig tree and the summer season, which is *not* when the figs bear fruit, but when the tree bears the leaves that will eventually *lead* to the fruit. And Jesus said in verse 30:

**as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.**

... so Jesus is saying that the leaves that will eventually produce the *superior* fruit is what the fruit trees "put forth" in the summer. So what is Jesus saying here?

Remember Jesus isn't giving a horticultural class here. He is talking about the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New. And He is giving this information in the form of a Parable so that only the elect of God will grasp it.

So, here is the connection. Jesus is saying that the *first* fruit that comes early on, that is based on the *old* leaves, is the people of the Old Covenant. And their fruit is *inferior* and *weak* because it is based on old growth, which is the *inferior* First Covenant that came forth from the blood of animals and the ministry of a sinful priesthood.

But, when the Old dies off, there is coming *new* leaves. And this will happen in the summer. And while these new leaves are *not* the final fruit, they are the *beginning* of the new fruit that will be the *superior* fruit, which are the children of the Kingdom, the product of an infinitely *superior* Covenant made on infinitely *superior* Promises made by an infinitely *superior* High Priest that offered an infinitely *superior* Sacrifice.

And so, Jesus is saying that when they see all the events that He has talked about from verse 6 all the way to verse 28 come to pass, these Jewish believers need to understand that this is not the end of all things, it is merely the end of the operation of the Old Covenant.

And so while many Jews will be tempted to think that God has utterly abandoned them and just given up, what is actually happening is that all this catastrophic death and destruction is merely the putting forth of the "new leaves of summer" that is signifying the *beginning* of the glorious reign of the New Covenant, which will bring forth the superior "latter fruit" of the end.

And this won't be seen or understood by the millions of Jews who will run into Jerusalem ahead of the advancing Roman Army. They are running to that great city out of the firm conviction that God will never allow pagans to utterly destroy their temple and worship and way of life. So they do not think to repent. They do not think to run to Jesus for forgiveness. They have no concept of needing a merciful Savior. They are convinced by everything they have been taught by the religious hypocritical leaders that their ethnic birth has purchased them Favor with God.

These are the spiritually rich, these are the spiritually filled, these are the spiritually content, and these are those who are well spoken of. And back in **Luke 6**, Jesus called them "cursed". And as they ran into the city and stood before the great Temple thinking that God would do what He had done before, they died by the hundreds of thousands in a slaughter that the world had never seen before. And not one stone of the Temple was left standing.

But, the elect, those chosen vessels who had been graced by God to understand their own spiritual poverty, those who had been gifted by God to weep and mourn over their own sins, those who were gifted by God to hunger for a Righteousness that they knew they didn't have and could not obtain, were called "blessed" by Jesus. And they heeded the warnings of Jesus in this Passage, and they ran into the mountains and, according to history, not a single one of them died at the hands of the Roman Army.

And as they came down from those mountains and saw the utter devastation of that great city that crucified the Lord, they knew that summer was upon them. And so they encouraged their hearts through the words of Jesus and the Apostles, and they went forth into all the world bearing the best fruit and carrying the Message of the Kingdom of God!

And so to encourage their hearts and to cause them to remember that He had told them that all this destruction was going to happen, Jesus said:

**Luke 21:31-33**

**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.**

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.