

Zechariah & Luke: The Returning King

Lesson 16: The Wonder-Working King

Key Verse: *And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him. ~Luke 21.38*

The promises **The Prophet** makes in this apocalyptic passage are like glitter after a preschool craft; they are EVERYWHERE, and surprising to find in such unobvious places! Just like glitter is a reminder of fun had during a crafting event, the **signs and wonders** our God and Messiah have performed over history are a reminder of His promises. More than that, they are a call to increased faith through a deeper knowledge of God.

O Lord, You suffered for us, a people who could not and cannot understand this necessity even on this side of Your suffering and resurrection. You continue to warn us of judgment while promising endurance and security in all that will cause us great distress. We praise You for suffering for such temporally-minded, feeble, evil, and powerless people. We praise You for coming so that we may be eternally secured in Your presence. Increase our faith! Give us endurance! Preserve us from being trapped by life's distracting details and routines! And Come Lord Jesus, Come!

Luke 21.5-38: **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.

20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. **21** Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, **22** for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. **23** Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. **24** They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. **25** “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, **26** people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **27** And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **28** Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

29 And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. **30** As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. **31** So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. **32** Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. **33** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. **34** “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. **35** For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. **36** But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take

place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

37 And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet.

38 And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

Diamonds: The hope in God we discovered in Lesson 15 (“The King of Creation”) continues through Jesus’s teaching this week. In light of this truth, this week’s passage concerning Jesus’s return and His final judgment are a delightful reminder of the hope we have today – right now, in this moment, as you read this – as well as our hope in the future!

Before we begin, let’s remember Jesus’s prior teaching about the better questions we must focus our attention upon as we listen to His teachings about future judgment and His return (final consummation).

1. If you can, return to Lesson 8, “The Rabbi King”. Question 2e asks what the “better question Jesus wants us to ask” ourselves when we wrestle with inexplicable tragedies whose victims are indiscriminate (Luke 13.1-5). Rather than focus on victim-blaming, what does Jesus tell us *must* be our focus (Luke 13.5)? (This parallels Jesus’s awkward illustration in Luke 17.37 explained in Lesson 11, “King of Kings”, in the comments in Question 15)

If someone warned you that the Twin Towers, or the World Trade Center, located in the financial district of New York City were going to be destroyed in one day, you would have shaken your head in absolute disbelief and considered the prognosticator’s warning as a need for psychiatric intervention. Yet, a national tragedy for the United States saw these two iconic, well-engineered buildings reduced to rubble on September 11, 2001.¹ The people met Jesus’s warning of the future total destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in a similar manner: skepticism². Yet, the Romans reduced this iconic temple into rubble, stone-by-stone, in AD 70.

2. What are Jesus’s hope-filled direct instructions, commands, or phrases in this week’s passage?

- a. Review the hope-filled message to God’s people in the midst of the chaotic scenes of Jesus’s purification from Lesson 15, “The King of Creation”, (Question 2). Where do you find similar messages of hope from God in Zechariah 12 and from Jesus (Luke 21.5-38) as they warn of coming chaos, judgment, and destruction?

Once again, Jesus’s divine instincts settle the matter of the accuracy of His prophecy by addressing our core concerns that drive anxiety, fear, confusion, and pursuit of control during chaos. Jesus teaches us not to be fooled, to endure in faith, to pay attention, and to keep focused on how the story ends. Some of these teachings sound familiar!

3. How are we to follow Jesus’s command not to be “led astray” (V 8) despite people crying out that the world is ending alongside evidence of such in the general chaos of world events? What clear instructions does Jesus provide in verses 8-9 to give us clarity in such moments?

¹It is estimated that close to 3,000 people were killed in the simultaneous attacks beyond the World Trade Center on that day.

²To be fair, there is scholarly debate about the level of skepticism in the response to the hearers of this prophecy. In truth, this temple was a massive and well-engineered structure built to avoid annihilation. The idea that the disciples instantly believed Jesus’s prophecy is also difficult to defend.

The prophecies in verses 10-17 contain both completed events and those occurring, ending only at Jesus's return. The prophecies referring to the intense persecutions are chronicled in the book of Acts. All the prophecies referenced in verses 12-17 came true in the imprisonment, betrayals, and murders of the first Christians in Israel and throughout the Mediterranean. However, Christians continue to endure persecution from friends, family, strangers, and governments. This will continue until Jesus's return.

4. What is the interesting instruction Jesus provides to His people who are being persecuted in verses 14-15?

5. How does this instruction, with its promise, buttress His command to endure persecutions in faith (V 19)? How does this instruction and promise build a faith that endures persecution for His name (V 17)? (And isn't it a bit relieving, too?!?!)

It is the last week of Jesus's life, so there are very few parables for Him left to tell. As He explains the meaning of the fig tree's indication of summer's imminent arrival, He says in verse 32 that "this generation will not pass away until all has taken place." While there is not a clear-cut explanation that fully satisfies His intentions, we need to understand that the definition of "generation" in His time was used to describe a 40-year timeline of "a group of people characterized by having the same spiritual condition. The emphasis is "not on *when* they live, but on *how* they live."³ (Genesis 6.11-12, 7.1; Numbers 32.13; Psalm 12.7)

Generation can also refer to a race, or those descended from a common ancestor. Jesus may have used generation in this manner in Luke 11.50-51 alongside Matthew 11.16 and 12.39. In addition, some scholars favor the positive use of the term generation to mean "the chosen people of God – the generation of good disciples who believe the promises of coming redemption."⁴

What we do know is that Jesus is not advising us to set a date (and reminder) on our Google calendars! Dr. Ryken summarizes this beautifully: "Even if it is hard to know for sure what 'generation' means, what the verse means is unmistakable. As surely as summer follows springtime, the words of Jesus will all come true, from the fall of Jerusalem to the end of the world, when the Son of Man will come with power and everlasting glory."⁵

6. How would you update Jesus's warning and phrasing in verse 34 to common "traps" we encounter today? What are some traps you encounter because you live on earth (V 35)?

What a gracious God who understands that our sin-marred instincts (such as "fainting", confusion, anxiety, and "foreboding") will kick in at His return. No matter, because what happens next is secured in Jesus's defeat of sin and of our sin-marred instincts.

7. Return to your answers to Questions 11 and 12 in Lesson 15, "The King of Creation". How will you "have the strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man" (V 36)?

³ Ryken, p.438, Sproul, p.517

⁴ The thoughts and writing found in this paragraph are of Ryken, p.438

⁵ Ryken, p.439

It is common for law enforcement servants to seek solitary living upon retirement, After multiple decades witnessing the most sin-filled human acts, unending depravity of unimaginable scale, and enduring the raw state of our deplorable hearts, it is no wonder these men and women desire to be as far removed from humanity as possible. In a similar action (V 37), Jesus required some separation from the intensity and crush of the weight of humanity's sinfulness as He prepared to endure a sign and wonder nonpareil: crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. However, rather than pursuing permanent relief in a quiet countryside, Jesus returned daily to the temple to complete His Father's will – teaching and preaching of His Kingdom's arrival (V 38).

8. How do Jesus's actions in verses 37-38 prove that Jesus was a "prisoner of hope" (Zechariah 9.12)?

Deity: The Prophet⁶~ (Luke 21.38) from the Greek word *prophetes*, "one who speaks in the place of" or "a spokesman".

"Beginning with Moses (Exodus 3.15) God's prophets were recognized as authoritative messengers from God speaking directly on His behalf. Their authority was such that what they said on God's behalf was viewed as God Himself speaking" ...using phrasing such as "Thus says the LORD" (Exodus 4.22, Joshua 7.13, 24.2, Judges 6.7-18; and many more in 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings). In Ezekiel 20.1-45, we see additional prophetic phrasing: "declares the Lord GOD".

The prophets' messages were delivered by God verbally and in visions or dreams. The prophets' messages are found in several different literary formats:

- Historical narratives such as God's recount of creation in Genesis 1
- Judgments of God as found in Genesis 3.13-19 when sin entered His creation
- Instructive commands such as the Law in Exodus 20 and as recorded in Leviticus
- Poetic literature as found in the Psalms
- Apocalyptic literature such as Zechariah 12
- Messianic promises such as in Zechariah 9.9 and 12.10

No matter the literary style, or the delivery method, "what was written was considered to be God's own words conveyed through His human prophet. What the prophet wrote, God revealed." There is much scholarly debate about the current role of prophets and prophecy that is based upon differing organized Christian religions. It is the view of Reformed theology that "God has spoken fully and finally in Christ, and we are in no need of extra revelation. Instead, standing in line with the prophets we are to proclaim the canonical revelation we do have to each other."⁷

9. What is God's message in Luke 3.21-22? What does this mean about everything Jesus said while on earth? How does this prove Jesus as "The Prophet" (this lesson's Deity)?

"Due to the constant threat of false prophets (Matthew 7.15; Acts 20.29-31; Jude 3-4), the prophets' message was to be tested against truth that had been previously revealed (1 Corinthians 14.29; 1 Thessalonians 5.20-22). The genuineness of a New Testament prophet's ministry, like that of the Old Testament counterparts, could be determined by his doctrinal accuracy (Deuteronomy 13.1-5; Acts 20.29-30; 2 Peter 2.1)."

In apocalyptic literature, "as the prophet speaks to the people of his own day, he looks to the future. He sees a time of judgment coming, a righteous disaster that will strike his own people, if they do not repent."⁸ This is the

⁶ MacArthur&Mayhue, pgs. 87, 756-757, 858

⁷ [Spirit of Prophecy, Ligonier Ministries](#)

⁸ Ryken, p.430

purpose of Jesus's message in Luke 21.5-38.

10. What has The Prophet taught you in His apocalyptic message that increases your faith (Luke 21.5-38)?

Doctrine: Signs and Wonders⁹~ (Luke 21.25-28) peculiar and miraculous acts or events based on redemptive-historical acts of God. The primary purpose of signs and wonders is to “call the people of God back to those foundation events, to encourage them to remember God’s saving acts in history, to discern their significance, and to pass on that information to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6.20-24).

In the New Testament, Jesus’s miracles are referred to as “signs”, whose purpose is for the listener and reader of Jesus’s signs “to reflect on the signs that [the author/speaker] reports, to think through the *significance* of those redemptive events, especially Jesus’s resurrection, and thereby believe (Luke 1.1-4; John 20.30-31).”

Jesus’s miracles “are symbol-laden events rich in meaning for those with eyes to see...Jesus’s ‘signs’ stretch far beyond displays of raw power and personal attestation; they frequently serve as acted parables, pregnant acts of power, suggestive signs (such as Luke chapters 10, 13-15 and so many more).”

All that said, it is important to understand “that not all biblical ‘signs’ or even ‘wonders’ are miraculous. Several prophets performed ordinary but symbol-laden actions that were called ‘signs (Ezekiel 12.1-11, 24.15-27; Isaiah 20.3)”. In fact, the Egyptian magicians in Exodus 7.8-8.18 could match Moses miracle for miracle for quite a while. In addition, God provides a warning in Revelation 13 of the signs and wonders of the “second beast” so that His people are not fooled, confused, and led astray.

Simply put, signs and wonders must have the effect of drawing people to God, rather than themselves, or their sign and wonder (like a magician’s performance). “In Moses’s day, that was the Exodus; in ours, it is the cross and resurrection (Deuteronomy 13.1-5; Mark 13.21-22 alongside Luke 21.8).

11. To what do Jesus’s prophesied signs and wonders point toward (Luke 21.5-36)? (See verses 9, 27 and 31 to warm up your thoughts. Prayerfully explore the future He is pointing you toward.)

12. What glitter-like promise have you relied on when you have suffered persecution for your belief in Jesus as Messiah, trials that have tested your belief in God, and/or difficult losses that stripped you down to your core being? How did He fulfill His promise(s) in a surprising and delightful way (like when you find glitter in your hair days later)?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: Your answer to question 12 may make a great inspiration to your SSP!

⁹Carson, D.A., “The Purpose of Signs and Wonders in the New Testament”, pgs 89-118 in Packer, J.I., et. all, *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*

Lecture Outline:

Aim: Believers view the world through the lens of hope.

- I. The Horrors (Luke 21.5-24) **T1:** The lens of hope helps believers remain focused on God amid the horrors of His just judgment.
 - a. How do you respond to the horrors you see in this world?
 - b. What fears do the signs that precede the end of the world stoke in you?
 - c. How could you find comfort and peace through the lens of hope?
- II. The Hope (Luke 21.25-38) **T2:** The lens of hope helps believers remain watchful, prayerful, and busy sharing the gospel!
 - a. Which cares of this life are keeping you distracted from the hope that is yours in Christ?
 - b. What will you do differently to keep viewing this world through the lens of hope?

Packer, J.I.; Sproul, R.C.; McGrath, Alister E.; Colson, Charles W.; et al, *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1997) Edited by Colson, Charles & Horton, Michael Scott

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