

70. Jesus Taught About the Suffering to Come

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to fully understand that Christ is God. We also saw that we want to show them by our own example that we can trust the Lord to supply our needs just as the poor widow trusted the Lord to supply her needs. Jesus said that she gave much more than the rich because she gave her entire livelihood out of her extreme poverty. In contrast, the rich gave a very small part of their riches to the Lord. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus warned His disciples about the suffering that would come in the future.

Luke 21:5-7 says, “Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, ‘These things which you see—the days will come in which not *one* stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.’ So they asked Him, saying, ‘Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign *will there be* when these things are about to take place?’” Jesus had compared the wealthy and their gifts to the poor widow. However, many of those listening were focused on the wealth that had been used to make the temple a very beautiful place. The rich, and even Herod, had given much wealth to beautify the temple courtyard and walls. Some of the people began pointing out these beautiful decorations to Jesus.

Jesus used that opportunity to help the disciples realize that their focus was not to be on the building. Jesus said that the days were coming when there would not be one stone left upon another. Jesus made it clear that the temple and everything in it would be destroyed. In the year 70 A.D., the Romans came and completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple. They took all of the gold and everything else of value in the temple before they destroyed it. The disciples wanted to know when this would happen. The disciples also included one more question that is mentioned in Matthew 24:3, “Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’” Here, we see that they also asked about the end of the age. Jesus used the questions of the disciples to tell them about the things that would happen before He returned to rule on the earth so these verses also give us a description of the events that will happen to Israel during the seven-year period known as the tribulation.

Jesus did not want the disciples or any future Christians to be deceived. Luke 21:8-9 says, “And He said: ‘Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, “I am *He*,” and, “The time has drawn near.” Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end *will not come* immediately.’” Jesus said there would be many false teachers. Many of these false teachers will even claim to be Christ. False teachers often use non-Biblical teachings about the future to try and deceive Christians. Some false teachers even set specific dates for the coming of Christ. Jesus did not want us to be deceived and led astray by such false teachings. Instead, Jesus said that we should expect to hear about wars, disturbances and confusion. Jesus said we do not need to be terrified by such things. Jesus said that these things had to happen before His coming and that they did not mean the end would come immediately.

Jesus said that there would be great signs before His coming to rule on the earth. Luke 21:10-11 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.’” Here, we see that there will be much conflict and many wars between the nations of the world before Christ comes to rule on the earth. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 57:20-21, “‘But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. “*There is no peace,*” says my God, “for the wicked.”’” As long as there are evil people, there will not be peace between the nations.

Jesus said that there will also be other things that happen on the earth before His coming. He said that there will be great earthquakes in various places. In fact, Romans 8:20-22 says that the earth itself is looking forward to deliverance. Those verses say, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” These great earthquakes will even happen in areas that do not normally have earthquakes. Jesus also said that there would be famines and pestilences (plagues).

Then, Jesus said that there would be fearful sights and great signs from heaven before His coming to rule on this earth. Mark 13:24-25 says, “‘But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.’” Revelation 6:13 adds, “And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.” Then, Revelation 8:12 says, “Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.” These fearful sights and great signs in the heavens will force everyone on earth to realize that something unusual is happening.

However, in addition to what is happening to the earth and the heavens, many things will also happen to the people who become followers of Christ during the tribulation. Luke 21:12-19 says, “‘But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle *it* in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put *some* of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls.’” Here, we see that those who truly follow Christ can expect to suffer. This will be especially true during the seven-year period known as the tribulation.

Paul told Timothy, in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” From the time of the apostles, persecution has been present. Acts 5:40-41 says, “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed

from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” The followers of Christ began to experience this persecution very soon after Christ returned to heaven.

Jesus also gave instructions about what to do when any follower faces persecution. He told the disciples that when a follower is brought before kings and rulers for the sake of Christ that He will cause that to turn out to be an opportunity to speak for Christ and share the Gospel. Paul certainly demonstrated this in the book of Acts. Christ said that His followers did not need to prepare in advance what they should say. Instead, Jesus promised that He will give the words to speak in such situations and those in opposition will not be able to contradict or resist the wisdom that Jesus gives. Stephen demonstrated this in Acts 6:10 where we read, “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.”

Jesus also warned the disciples that His followers would even be betrayed by family or friends. In fact Jesus warned the disciples that some of them would even be put to death. James was the first of the Twelve to be killed. Acts 12:1-2 says, “Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” Throughout the generations from the time Jesus returned to heaven, followers of Jesus have suffered persecution and death from those who reject Christ. That will happen to an even greater degree during the seven years of the tribulation just before Christ returns to rule on the earth.

Those who are killed during the seven years of tribulation will be raised back to life to rule with Jesus on the earth for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4 says, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” Here, we see that the followers in that time will be raised back to physical life.

However, there is even more promised for the future after that time. Christ promised that all who follow Him will experience eternal life that will last forever. That is why Jesus said, “By your patience possess your souls.” The word translated “possess” *means to acquire or obtain something*. Jesus said, in John 10:27-28, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” This is a promise that we want to make certain that our physical and spiritual children understand. Even if they suffer for Jesus for a time on this earth, they can look forward to the eternal life that will never end because of the fact that Christ will keep all of His promises. That is the promise for every follower of Jesus.