

71. Jesus Taught About His Return to Earth

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to prepare for any suffering that might come in their lives. The apostles experienced such suffering soon after Jesus returned to heaven. Others throughout the centuries have also experienced such suffering. Today, in many parts of the world, Christians continue to suffer for their faith. Such suffering will happen until Jesus comes back to rule on this earth for a thousand years so we need to prepare every follower of Jesus for the fact that those who live godly will suffer for Jesus. In our topic today, we see that Christ went on to tell the disciples about the things that will happen at the end of the tribulation just before Jesus comes back to rule on this earth.

Jesus had told the disciples that Jerusalem would be destroyed. We will see in these verses that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. is just a little picture of the destruction that will happen during the time of the seven-year tribulation. Luke 21:20-24 says, ““But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”” Here, we see that Jerusalem will suffer until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was very complete but was just a preview of a later destruction. These verses talk about that future destruction. Here, we see that these verses describe the days of vengeance when all things that are written will be fulfilled. Mark 13:14-16 says, ““So when you see the “*abomination of desolation*” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.”” Here, we see that this destruction will come at the time when the ‘*abomination of desolation*’ first announced by Daniel is set up in the temple at Jerusalem. That did not happen at the time that Rome destroyed Jerusalem.

At this future time of destruction, we see that the people in Judea are told to flee to the mountains. Those in the city are to get out very quickly or they will not escape. Those in the country are not to enter Jerusalem or they will not escape. We see that those days are called the days of vengeance. Once the ‘*abomination of desolation*’ is set up in the temple in Jerusalem, the antichrist will only have three and a half years before Christ will come to bring an end to the times of the Gentiles. However, those three and a half years are called “the time of Jacob’s trouble”. Jeremiah 30:7 says, ““Alas! For that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it; and it *is* the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.”” This will be an especially terrible time for those who are pregnant or are nursing babies. However, it will be a day of great suffering for all of the Jews. Many of the Jews will be killed. Others will be taken as captives to nations throughout the earth. That suffering will only be brought to an end by the return of the Lord to rule on the earth.

Luke 21:25-28 says that Jesus will return to rule on the earth with power and great glory. Those verses say, “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” The coming of Christ at the Rapture to take the Christians to heaven will have no advance warning and that coming is compared to a thief in the night. However, this time when Christ comes back to rule at the end of the tribulation has plenty of advance notice.

First, it will happen three and a half years after the ‘*abomination of desolation*’ is set up in the temple at Jerusalem. Second, we see in these verses that there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. Third, on the earth there will be distress of nations and the people will be perplexed. Fourth, unusual things will be happening to the oceans and great tossing of the waves. Fifth, the hearts of the people on the earth will be failing them because of their great fear at all of the things that are happening and other things that they expect to happen. Sixth, the powers of the heavens will be shaken. It is when all of these things are happening that suddenly the Son of Man will come in a cloud with power and great glory. Nothing will be normal on the earth when Christ comes. That is why Christ told the disciples that the followers of Christ are to look up and lift up their heads when these things begin to happen. They can know at that time that their redemption is getting close

To illustrate the time of His coming to rule on the earth, Jesus then gave the disciples a parable. Luke 21:29-33 says, “Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Jesus used the fig tree for this parable but He said that the same thing will happen with all of the other trees. Israel is called “the fig tree” in Hosea 9:10, where we read, “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. *But* they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves *to that* shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved.” As a result, when the things mentioned as happening to Israel begin to happen, it is time to realize that the coming of Christ as King will arrive very soon.

When the ‘*abomination of desolation*’ is set up in the temple, this passage and others warn the people of Israel that it is time to flee to the mountains to prevent immediate destruction. Jesus then gave a promise to let the disciples know how close the coming of the Lord would be when the Jews will need to escape to the mountains immediately to escape death. Jesus said that the generation of people that is alive at that time will not pass away until all the things take place and Christ comes back to rule on the earth. This event is so certain that Matthew, Mark and Luke all say the same thing about the certainty of that event. Mark 13:31 says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Matthew says the same thing in Matthew

24:35.

Then, Jesus gave a warning for all people of the need to be ready. Luke 21:34-38 says, ““But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”” And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.”

The word translated “take heed” means *to think about or to pay attention to*. The desire of Jesus is for every person to pay attention to this warning. Then, Jesus warned of three things that affect the heart and will keep people from paying attention to His words. The word translated “carousing” is speaking of the morning after headache that people experience when they drink wine to excess. This prevents a person from thinking clearly and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in his or her heart. Proverbs 31:6-7 says, “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” This can become like a heavy weight in the life of a person.

The second word is “drunkenness”. The word speaks about a person that is intoxicated by alcohol at that very moment. Belshazzar was intoxicated when God caused the fingers of a man’s hand to write on the wall. When the king saw the writing going on the wall, Daniel 5:6 says, “Then the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.” Here, we see that the king could see the writing but he could not think clearly. Instead, his thoughts troubled him and he began to shake. At the same time, his knees were knocking against each other.

Third, we see that the cares of this life affect the heart and keep people from paying attention to the words of Jesus. The word translated “cares” means *anxiety or worry*. Luke 8:14 says, ““Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”” Here, we see that worry, riches and pleasures of life also keep people from really hearing the Word of God. Such people will not be prepared for Christ when He comes back to rule on this earth. In contrast, those who are prepared will escape all these things and stand before the Son of Man instead.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children be prepared for the coming of Christ at the Rapture of the church so that they will escape the seven years of tribulation as well as the eternal judgment to come. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children prepare for and be eagerly looking for the coming of Christ.