

The Gospel According to
Luke

“Apocalypse Now & Then”
Chapter 21:5-19

Introduction

You've just been chosen for *Extreme Home Makeover*. Ty Pennington wakes you up with his megaphone. The rest of the crew is there, promising you the home of your dreams. In just a few short hours, they *deconstruct* and *reconstruct* an amazing home with all the personal touches that make you the envy of the neighborhood.

You arrive by limo and they take you on a tour – showing you all the things that give your dream home the ‘wow’ factor. After seeing the footage and features and faucets, Ty finally looks at you and says, *Gene, what do you think?* And you answer: *Ty, 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.*

I dare you to say something like that, the next time a friend or family member is showing you their new house... Or car... Or truck... Or boat... Or whatever. For some, it will be a conversation-killer. But for others, it may be a conversation-starter.

The Jews were quite proud of the first century Temple in Jerusalem. It was a beautiful and magnificent structure. Herod had given it an extreme makeover. Jesus took a look at it and told them it was about to be destroyed – stone-by-stone. It started an incredible conversation about the future.

We want to listen in on that conversation. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Looking Forward To The Future Tribulation, and #2 Learning Patience In Your Present Tribulations.

#1 Looking Forward To The Future Tribulation
(v5-11)

Knock, Knock

(Who's there?)

Armageddon

(Armageddon, who?)

Armageddon outa here!

Look at verse twelve. The opening words are, **but before all these things...** It's an indication that Jesus was discussing *both* the future and what was about to happen in the present:

1. The things Jesus mentions in verses twelve through nineteen are *tribulations* that occurred during the lifetimes of His hearers.
2. The things He mentions in verses five through eleven look forward to the *Great Tribulation* which will occur in the future.

The Bible is clear: Both the Old and New Testament's predict a final, awful period of time that will come upon the earth. It is commonly called the Tribulation; or the Great Tribulation. It will last a literal period of seven years. You get the best description of it in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, in chapters six through nineteen.

Nothing could be further from the minds of His disciples! They expected Jesus to establish the kingdom of God on earth, with the Temple as its headquarters.

Luke 21:5 Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said,

Luke 21:6 **"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."**

Luke 21:7 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?"

We are often taken by surprise in our walk with the Lord. The thing we least expected happens. We're not ready for it, and we want an explanation from the Lord.

The Temple would be destroyed. This happened only a few years later when the Romans sacked Jerusalem in 70AD. The Romans fulfilled Jesus' words to the letter. As the story goes, as fire raged

through the Temple, its beautiful gold adornments began to melt. The soldiers tore it apart, stone-by-stone, to get at the gold.

Luke 21:8 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.

Luke 21:9 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."

Luke 21:10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

Luke 21:11 And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

The Temple was destroyed in 70AD. Some of these other things have occurred throughout human history:

1. There have been spiritual **deceptions** - many false Messiah's throughout history.
2. There have been local and even global **disputes** – wars... commotions... nation [rising] against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
3. There continue to be natural **disasters** - earthquakes, and famines and pestilences.

But when Jesus said, *there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven*, He established that He was looking far into the future, to the Great Tribulation that immediately precedes His Second Coming to the earth.

Jesus wasn't talking about Halley's Comet; or the Jupiter Effect; or any naturally occurring stellar or atmospheric phenomena. **Sights** and **signs from heaven** are those amazing things described in the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

It's becoming more popular to suggest that much of what we read in the Revelation of Jesus Christ was really already fulfilled in the first century, with the destruction of the Temple. In other words, Revelation is not future; it is fulfilled.

Not true! Jesus accurately predicted the first century destruction of the Temple; He looked down the corridor of human history and

predicted cycles of spiritual *deception*... local and global *disputes*... and natural *disasters*. But it isn't until after there are **fearful sights and great signs from heaven** that Jesus will return to earth, a second time, to finish what He started. It isn't until after a literal seven-year Great Tribulation on our planet.

There will be times of relative peace and prosperity; pockets of spirituality on the planet. But things will keep getting worse throughout history.

There has been a great deal of debate about how Hurricane Katrina was handled (or mishandled) by the authorities. One of the issues is whether or not people received sufficient warning, and when they received it.

We should be warning people about the coming firestorm of God's judgment upon the planet. The Lord has entrusted us with information about the future that impacts every person on earth. We need to be about our spiritual business.

#2 Learning Patience In Your Present Tribulations (v12-19)

Don't confuse the Great Tribulation that is coming with everyday tribulations that occur in your life. Jesus turned His attention to preparing His followers for their tribulations.

Luke 21:12 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.

Having returned to Heaven to await His Second Coming at the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus lets us know what is generally in store for us. It's a great one-verse summary of a large portion of the Book of Acts. In fact, it's a great summary of the entire age in which we live.

Luke 21:13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.

Jesus just described some pretty severe persecution. He called it an **occasion** – like a special occasion. You could translate the word as *opportunity*. Your tribulations as a believer are special occasions that

give you the opportunities to show others, and share with others, about God's grace and mercy in your life.

Luke 21:14 Therefore settle *it* in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer;

Luke 21:15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

Keep this statement in its context. If you are persecuted for Jesus' sake, you need not prepare your defense beforehand. The Lord will empower you in that moment.

This does not mean you are always to be totally spontaneous. If you are involved in some ministry, then prepare for it!

There is also a comforting principle here. God will give you the grace you need, when you need it. When you find yourself in some trouble as a believer, His grace will then become sufficient to lead you through it.

Luke 21:16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put *some* of you to death.

Some of you have felt the pain of rejection from family and friends. Jesus was talking about more than rejection; He called it **betrayal**, and indicated that for many it would lead to their being put to **death** by the authorities.

Some are still clinging too much to their family, or to their friends. There are times in your life that require you to take a stand for the Lord and against family and friends. We're blessed that (at least for now) no one is putting us to death for our stand! But taking a stand for Jesus does kill some relationships.

Luke 21:17 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.

You'd think people would be happy for you! In my own life, before I came to Jesus, I was a disaster. My family and friends should have been suggesting intervention. Instead, we all just rushed forward towards death and Hell. When I gave my life to Jesus, my family and friends were genuinely disappointed. They disapproved.

You don't hear this too much. No one says, *Come to Jesus, so you can be **hated by all!*** Your love for Jesus should be so exclusive... so passionate... that anyone who is not a believer is jealous of you, seeing that you have something that they lack.

Luke 21:18 *But not a hair of your head shall be lost.*

Does this mean believers are guaranteed a full head of hair? Can you beat hair loss, without rugs, plugs, or drugs?

In another place, Jesus said the hairs of your head were all numbered. Not just that God knows the total number; but each individual hair, throughout your lifetime, has its own number; and God keeps an inventory of it.

Jesus just said you would be betrayed, even to death. Obviously He means here that ultimately you will not and cannot be **lost** in eternity.

Luke 21:19 *By your patience possess your souls.*

We're all familiar with the term, *demon possessed*. The idea is that some other force, a demon, is in control of your faculties.

On a less radical level, we sometimes talk about a person being *possessed* by a dream... or a desire... That consumes them.

The idea here is that you can **possess your own soul**. No matter the situation or the circumstances; you can be consumed by God's peace and joy, realizing that He is in control of all things that affect you.

How? **By your patience**. The word means *cheerful and hopeful endurance*.

1. I can **endure** my circumstances – even if I'm betrayed to death – because my life is in God's hands. The worst the world can do to me brings out the best.
2. I can be **hopeful** as I endure because I know Jesus will never leave me or forsake me.
3. I should be **cheerful** – have the right attitude – because all things really work together for the good.

There's a movie currently out, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, that portrays a case of demon-possession. I've only seen the trailer; I probably won't see the movie – at least not in the theater. The images I've seen of it grab you, and you think, *Man, that person is possessed by sinister forces.*

People ought to look at you and I, especially in our tribulations, and say, *Man, Gene is **possessed by patience!*** Imagine someone asking you how you can be so hopeful, so cheerful, despite your troubles; and you say, *I'm possessed!*

Technically, you'd say, *I possess my own soul.*

Applying God's Word:

For the Christian:

The disciples were excited about the earthly Temple. Jesus told them it was about to be destroyed. Is Jesus some kind of cosmic killjoy? *Not at all!* He tells you in another place,

John 14:2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

John 14:4 And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

We should live in a constant state of homesickness – looking for and longing for the return of the Lord.

For the nonChristian:

Before Jesus comes in His Second Coming... Before the beginning of the seven-year Great Tribulation... Is an event called the Rapture of the Church.

If you are not ready, you will be left behind – for a time on earth, and probably for eternity in Hell.

