

## Jesus' Last Sermon pt 3

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**Bible Text:** Luke 21:25-36  
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Isn't that a great song? Wonderful, wonderful truth in that song. One of my favorites of the more contemporary songs that are out there now.

Luke 21 as we come to the third and final part of our Lord's final sermon. He is close to his crucifixion. He has entered Jerusalem as he's been teaching his disciples and telling them, to their shock and dismay, that he's not going there to sit on a throne and establish an earthly kingdom and assert Israel's superiority over the other nations. Not yet. He has told them he's going there to die. They are quite startled by that and then in this last sermon, he gives them more shocking news that the temple, the temple in Jerusalem, the centerpiece of their life and their hope, Jesus says is going to be completely laid desolate. There are a lot of lessons he's teaching in this final sermon. This is his final public discourse before he is arrested and betrayed, of course, and then crucified.

Let's look at it together, Luke 21, beginning in verse, for today, verse 25 and going through verse 36. He continues in this discourse and then he says, verse 25,

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.

Convulsions, he's saying, will be occurring in all the known reality, heaven and earth. What a day. Verse 27,

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."

Now, quick review. First of all, in part one, looking mainly at verses 5 through 7, I gave you some insights into prophetic interpretation, and we talked about how when you're reading the prophecies, particularly the Old Testament, and it's true of the prophecies Jesus is giving here, there is often an immediate partial fulfillment, but then there's also an ultimate final fulfillment, and we see that here also. For example, as Jesus has been prophesying all through this sermon of this great calamity and destruction that's coming, there was a partial more initial fulfillment in 70 A.D, Titus, the Roman general, comes through and completely destroys Jerusalem. It's an unbelievable bloodbath like hardly any other that has ever occurred in the history of warfare, and the temple in particular is destroyed completely. That partially fulfilled, but now as we go particularly with our text today, we go further and we see there has to be an even greater and more ultimate fulfillment of what Jesus is saying that wasn't fully fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Titus destroyed Jerusalem. So we begin to understand something of how prophecy unfolds. There should be an immediate partial fulfillment to the people or the generation listening, but also an ultimate and final fulfillment.

Secondly under part one, we talked about how Jesus is the true temple; that the real spiritual lesson behind Jesus declaring to them, "This temple that you so cling to and hold to," and actually for far too many Jews, they made an idol of the temple itself instead of the God and the Savior the temple pointed to. So he was trying to point out to them, "I've got to wean you off of your routine, your rituals, and your religion, and get your faith on me. I am the fulfillment of everything the temple pointed to."

Now, in part two, last time we were together, we talked about more particularly these prophecies concerning the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and intermingled in those prophecies, some coming signs of the second coming. And I. in that, he talked about how there will be false Christs and I elaborated further to include false leaders because those always go together. Men who are falsely claiming to be the Savior, leader of the world, and then those who would come along and just be false teachers in churches and synagogues and theological institutions, wherever it may be. And even in countries, as I pointed out from Isaiah. The Old Testament records that when God's judgment is coming, he gives them leaders who are not true principled men. False leaders.

Secondly, we talked about the fact that there would be wars and instability in the land. We saw this, historians record it in the years leading up to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. but, of course, there is a further fulfillment in the second coming of Jesus Christ that is yet in the future.

III. Earthquakes, plagues, famines and signs. Historians record an unusual amount of pestilence, famine, plagues and earthquakes in various countries of the world leading up

to 70 A.D. and the destruction of Jerusalem but, again, we know also this is going to occur at the final end of the age when Jesus, or right before Jesus comes again.

IV. The persecution of the true church and true Christians. The Lord gave and in Matthew's account gives a very thorough account of how the believers in that day would be so persecuted and we see that in the book of Acts unfolding before 70 A.D. There was great persecution before that judgment that came through Titus, the Roman general, and who destroyed Jerusalem again in 70 A.D., but we also know that in those future days, during what we call the great tribulation, there is going to be severe persecution, now listen, not of professing Christians, but true Christians. You can just go back and study Germany under the reign of Hitler and see how so many professing churches and professing theologians and professing pastors and professing Christians went right along with Hitler. Now, certainly they didn't know everything but far too many of them knew enough but they got caught up in, "He's fixing everything. Everything is going to be better. It's going to be a wonderful day for Germany." And they went right past their principles and embraced this madman. Well, it's going to be the same thing in the future coming of the Lord before he returns, there is going to be another madman and this will be a global dictator and he's called the antichrist, and Christians, many professing Christians, not the true church but professing Christians, will clamor after him saying, "Yes, he may not be all we hoped for but he's going to fix stuff." As a matter of fact, we might have some men running for office today that kind of fit that description and while we are enamored to a degree, I myself personally appreciate a candidate or two who actually has some manly courage and some seeming principles, then when you look at their lives, you wonder where those principles come from because their life doesn't show it very much. So there is an attractiveness to leaders who will stand forth and tell the truth and not care what the liberal media or anybody else thinks about it, but we have to be careful selling our allegiance to a man whose life does not back up much of what he says.

So the Lord said that before Titus in 70 A.D. destroyed Jerusalem, true Christians will be persecuted. We see it in the Bible in the book of Acts and the epistles spell that out completely. It did happen, but it's also going to happen again right before our Lord's second coming and in a greater and more severe and more universal way.

Then finally, V. Under part two, the great suffering and terror that will just be all over the world in the second coming but was particularly addressed to Israel in Titus' destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Now we come to part three of Jesus' last sermon and here as we begin in verse 25, in part three, we have verbiage that leads us to believe this is overwhelmingly pointing to not Titus destroying Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the verbiage is much bigger than that, it must be pointing to the final coming of Christ at the end of the age and right before the setting up of the final eternal kingdom in the earth.

So let's look at it together, just two simple points as we unpack this together. First of all, warning signs. Warning signs. Jesus begins there in verse 25 and he says, "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars." You know, it has happened and it has been recorded in

Scripture that throughout time nature and the created order are moved over the momentous events ordained by her Creator. The frame of nature was convulsed at Sinai when God gave the Commandments to Moses and the people marveled over the sound, the thunder and the lightning, and they were trembling because of it. The heavens were darkened for three hours when our Lord hung on the cross, the Bible tells us. Then nature will once again fall into what I think a good word to describe what the text is saying, convulsions, right before the second coming of Jesus Christ. It's as if men will look at the sun and the moon and the stars and the waves and the oceans and the land around them and they'll just, it'll be, I mean to the most hardened unbeliever, it will be obvious that things are out of kilter. Something is coming. That's what the text is pointing out. Nature itself is going to be shaken under the weight and the magnitude of the coming of Jesus Christ because he comes as the righteous Lord with all power and all authority, and he comes as a fierce avenger of his holiness and honor and a powerful Savior for his elect.

Signs. These are the signs. Now, specifically he said there would be signs in the sun. Now, we do know that there have been specific times when God shut off the sun. When the plagues came upon Egypt, he darkened the earth, shut off the sun for a period of time. At the crucifixion of our Lord, the Bible says he darkened the earth. And then at the consummation of sin, he's going to darken the earth again right before Christ comes in judgment. I think there may be something to this in the fact that the sun has been worshiped by many people, many countries even, throughout the ages, but at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sun will bow in humble and glad allegiance to her Maker and to the shame of all who made her their idol to worship. When Christ returns, the sun is swallowed up in the brilliant illumination bursting forth from the all glorious Christ. So there's going to be signs in the sun. He didn't give us all the specifics but there are going to be strange things happening, so don't think this is going to happen and nobody is going to know Jesus is coming right away. They'll know something is up.

Verse 25, he says, there will be signs, again, in the moon and in the stars. You know, one can only wonder at the awesome and terrible things that will be occurring as the entire created order prepares for the unveiled Christ. Now, you need to think on that phrase just a moment, the unveiled Christ. Everything any of us or anyone knows about Christ is a veiled Christ; a Christ who willingly covered himself and denied himself of his divine prerogatives. Veiled himself of his glory. And there's a sense in which justice has not been served. There is a sense in which propriety has been robbed. That one day all of earth and all the universe will be caused to stand and witness the unavoidable unveiling of Jesus Christ.

That's what this is about and it's about all of the universe: the ocean, the seas, the sun, the moon and the stars. There is a sense that God has programmed into their very matter that they are trembling and convulsing thinking, "Here he comes!" What picture this is. What a picture. Matthew 24:29-30 give a parallel teaching as Matthew gives his account of this very teaching is what I believe, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." Convulsions. "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and

they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." The Lord points out, elaborating a little more, that the sea and the waves will have a difference about them, perhaps fierce storms and raging seas will bring terror to mankind and man, again, will know that the natural order and flow of nature has been disrupted. Things are greatly out of kilter.

He says in verse 25, there is going to be dismay among the nations, and I think what that means is there will be global assemblies of leaders and scientists will meet together to wonder over all these things. But the text tells us in verse 25, they will be dismayed. What it means is they have absolutely no answer as to what is going on and they have no means to escape and no way to turn back what has started to unfold before them. I don't know about you but there is a sense in which this causes a trembling in all of our souls but there is a sense in which it will be nice to see these proud arrogant secularists fall on their knees and say, "Something bigger than us is coming."

I just love it, I love the thought of the vindication of my Lord. They spit on him. They hated him. They scorned him, and to this day these rascals, these false teachers, pervert and twist and rape the biblical text to give it a secular, man-centered, liberal interpretation so that we can feel better about ourselves, and they bring our Lord down from the high lofty and glorious position he's in. I'm telling you, there is coming a day when Christ will be unveiled and seen as he is, and there will not be one syllable of dispute about who he is and what he is. I long for that day. All the great and haughty ones of the earth will be in dismay before that day. He hasn't even gotten here yet and the text says that they are going to be shaking in their boots knowing something's coming. Aren't you glad you're on the right side? I am.

Verse 26, Jesus says, "men are going to be fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the earth." That means they just see all this happening and literally strong courageous men are passing out as they witness things before their eyes over which they have no control. And then further on, the Bible tells us in Revelation 6:16 that men will cry to the rocks and the mountains and they will say, "Hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." Well, that hasn't even occurred yet and they're already fainting from what they're seeing. What a mighty reversal of events. You might even could say a reversal of fortunes or outlooks will be happening in the hearts of men when these things start happening. Unbelievers who never feared God, unbelievers whose hearts were constantly full of mocking and derision, they're all now stricken with immobilizing fear. But true believers are different because as unbelievers fall into fearing, true believers in faith are gaining hope. It is in this day as unbelievers are paralyzed in despair that believers begin to rise with joy in their hearts.

Verse 27, the Lord continues and he says, "All these things will be unfolded, then," verse 27, now this is the great tribulation out there in the future, and if I might give you what I'm confident is the chronology of events, we are all gone. The rapture of the church has occurred. We're with the Lord. There's only a remnant of Jews on the earth who have been genuinely and truly converted to faith in Christ that this particularly applies to. It is

for them. Folks, he's in Jerusalem. He's talking to Jews, and for that remnant that believes during the tribulation and are truly saved and now a part of his redemptive family, he's given this truth. But he says in verse 27, "Then they will see the Son of Man," I believe he says "they," because he's not talking about folks living on the earth; he's not talking at this point about Titus coming to destroy Israel in 70 A.D., he's talking about the end time. "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Now, we see this, of course, the Lord has been associated with clouds; he ascended back up into the clouds, the Bible says. I think certainly this means he's coming from the heavens but perhaps it also means he has such great holy glory that it requires the clouds to shield some of that so that men might not be instantly consumed in his presence. Jesus will return again and he has power to raise the dead and call all men into judgment. Those who were offended at him when he came the first time in his lowliness and humility, they will be paralyzed in fear at the power and the glory of his coming the second time. They refused him and they would not have him reign over them, but now he will trample upon them. They despised Jesus in his humility and now will be forced to face him in all of his glory.

Verse 28, "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up," this is for the true redeemed, regenerate and I'm convinced, remnant of Israel at this time. "When these things take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing nigh." These believers as all believers to a degree in every generation, experience, now listen to me, the rejection of the world, the mocking of the world, the scoffing of the world, and by the way, much scoffing and rejection from other so-called believers. In every age, there is going to be a great harlot church in this age of that's going to be ridiculing and persecuting every true believer. A false church, false preachers, false Christians, but the true believers experience such hatred, such rejection, but now all that, listen to me, is instantly swallowed up in joy and rejoicing. Can you imagine what a sudden change? Look, when Jesus unveils himself and steps down out of heaven onto earth, just immediately, listen to me, are you listening to me? Immediately every unbeliever will say, "I was wrong," and every Christian will say, "Hallelujah, for my faith in Jesus!" It's just going to happen that quick. Amazing, amazing the turn of fortune that is going to happen at that moment.

Again, Matthew 24:29 through 31. He says in verse, let me get that first though, "Straighten up, lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing nigh." The word "redemption," of course, means, "being released from a foreign, by a former rather bondage and from a foreign power." All of that is going to be broken and now the elect of God saved and living on the earth will be revealed before all the earthlings and even the universe as being one with the true God of heaven, and at this moment, they will instantly share his glory and bask in the light of his love and his joy.

Matthew 24, 24 rather, 29 through 31, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn." Instantly

all the unbelievers are going to mourn in dread before him. "And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." But what's going to happen to the believers on the earth, the true believers? Verse 31, "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other." I don't know how this is going to happen but it must be a fabulous event. Just swept up and swept away to the loving grace, joy and bosom of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Wow.

It's not over yet, folks. The final verdict is not in yet. The conclusion of the matter hasn't yet been, well, it's been concluded but it hasn't been unveiled yet. Jesus said, are you listening? "Of all that the Father gives me, I lose not one." Every single elect of God on the earth will be saved and brought to their Redeemer. Jesus said, "Everyone of them I died for made it. Came all the way in." I know, I know that are some theological complications there but you get to wallowing to far over there in universalism and you lose the impact of about 90% of the biblical text.

Well, the second part of this, saints be ready. He gives these warning signs and though it's got to cause fear and trembling even in genuine believers, it will be quickly be silenced as they are ushered into the joy of their Lord at his return. He says to the saints in general, be ready. He begins in verse 29. By the way, I don't think the fig tree is Israel, I think it's a general illustration. Verse 29, "Then He told them a parable: 'Behold the fig tree and all the trees,'" so it's not just a fig tree, at least not according to Luke's account, "'as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation,'" that's the generation living on the earth at this time, "'will not pass away until all things take place.'" So these unmistakable and terrible signs in the heaven and upon the earth will let you know that the Lord's coming is imminent.

You know, nature, he uses the fig tree specifically, but then he says all trees, nature in general really gives us a profound parable of the second coming every year. Did you hear that? Nature gives us a profound parable of the second coming every year. We have the long, hard, cold winter. We're having some of that right now. Nothing is budding, nothing is green, there is no harvest. It's just cold, dead winter. Then seemingly overnight the first edge of spring comes and the little buds come on the plants. Summer begins to develop and we see foliage and all the plants filling out, and we know it's just a few days when there is going to be fruit, the harvest. Well, the fruit and the harvest is the Lord's return. He said, "When you see these things unfolding, you'll know winter is giving way to spring. You'll know spring is giving way to summer. And you'll know summer is just about to give away to the fruit of the Lord's coming." He's just giving a general parable to saints saying, "Be ready. Be ready." Israel is, rather, the remnant of converted Israel on the earth, their faith will help them in this day. They will see the bud, they will see the spring sprouting, they will see the summer's growth, and they will witness the autumn fruit that is the Lord's return and the redemption at hand.

Now, verse 33, as he's telling these Jews this information, he knows that they'll be tempted to doubt and all true believers, even, have temptations of doubt, and he reminds them in verse 33, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." Bank on it, he's saying. My word is going to come true. Isaiah 51:6, "Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment And its inhabitants will die in like manner; But My salvation," my word that I will keep you, my true saved ones, "will be forever, And My righteousness will not wane." 2 Peter 3:10, Jesus said heaven and earth will pass away, 2 Peter gives a little bit more description about this, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements," that is the most basic foundational parts of matter, "will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."

Now, the word there for "destroyed" means "to loosen." It means the very core components, the atoms and molecules that make up every piece of matter, listen to me, when the Lord says it, it's just going to fall apart. Just fall apart. It's just going to be kind of like a, like you see on some of these special effects on some of these movies that are out today. Just something that will just go, poof, dissipate into nothing. It's just going to fall apart and it's interesting, scientists tell us today that of every element known to man, given enough heat, they will all dissolve and dissipate. Every one of them. And that's why the Bible says when Jesus comes he's going to use heat and dissipate it all. Can you imagine? Can you imagine the hardened worldly materialist who lives for this stuff on the earth and in a half of a split second Jesus causes every particle of it to just disappear? You say, "What happens to us?" Oh, he's going to preserve you so that you can stand at the judgment because there is a great white throne judgment, the Bible says, standing on nothing. This is amazing stuff. Amazing stuff.

The present heavens themselves, the atmosphere where the clouds are, where the birds fly, all the planets and the galaxies will all be vanquished at the Lord's command. Now, let's think back, for example, in Colossians 1:15 and 16, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created," Jesus created all things, "both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him." So in the beginning, Jesus by his mouth speaks and all things come from nothing into something, ex nihilo, is the Greek word there; something created from nothing into something. Secondly, presently, everything that is on the earth and everything that is in the universe presently holds together by the word of his power. Call it the force of gravity or whatever you may want to call it, but the Bible says the power there is a personal, persistent, present power of a person, Jesus Christ. The very reason your body molecules do not disintegrate into a billion different directions is because Jesus holds your eyeball in its socket right now. Do you not realize how the totality of everything resides in him? Everything resides in him. Colossians 1:17, "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." That means he has all authority. When he wants to, he can speak the word and say, "Okay, I want all things to fall apart." And it will, and that's what's going to happen.



So he'll speak a final time, the Bible says, and all things will come apart. As a matter of fact, Revelation, this won't be on your screen, Revelation 1:16, "In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength." Notice the emphasis on his word, his mouth. Revelation 2:16, "Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." Revelation 19:15, "From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty." And again, Revelation 19:21, "And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh."

So he's going to come and from the power of his spoken word, John Phillips, I never will forget that the Bible talks about Jesus coming in his second coming and he speaks to destroy his enemies. And somebody asked John Phillips, "What do you think he says to all these mighty armies amassed to oppose Jesus? When he speaks, what does he say?" He says, "Drop dead," and they do. And then he will speak again and completely dissipate, if you will, all matter that exists. The old heaven and earth will pass away.

But he promises to the saints of God, now this is his point, to the saints of God, "Hang on to my word. Everything else will not last but my word will last." Heaven and earth, the material, created universe, from time immemorial, once again, I think here is one of the points. The sun has been worshiped. The moon has been worshiped. The stars are worshiped. Animals are worshiped. Trees are worshiped. The oceans has been worshiped. Some men worship wind. Some men worship fire. You say, "Well, we're not in those antiquated ages anymore." Have you talked to an environmental extremist lately? Brother, they worship the earth. They worship the womb of earth from which we all spring forth. And Jesus is going to come back and say, "You like this earth?" Poof, it's gone. Is it not amazing to you how cuttingly clear the Lord is going to be in shaming and showing the error of all who trusted in anything but Christ? Look, folks, are you listening to me? There won't be a debate. There will not be a negotiation. There won't be discussion. There will just be utter immediate total humiliation of everyone who did not trust Christ.

Today we live in a world of dedicated, godless, secular materialists. Modern, modern science is different from modern science. The first modern scientists who used a scientific method were devout and godly men who were God-centered and used the scientific method to discover something of how this glorious God made things so that they might help mankind but also glorify the wisdom of God who made it all. And then we got further along and just like it has happened in every other realm of thinking and of knowledge, men lost their God base and became secularists. And now modern, modern science has rejected the God base.

I've been going to some ball games and I've been going to these Baptist universities like Furman University and Mercer University and Sanford University and, of course, you know I like to study church history and I know where they came from, they came from lowly, emotionally poor Baptist folks who 150 or so years ago sacrificed and sacrificed

and sacrificed and sacrificed to start a school that they might train their children and their pastors effectively and based on a scriptural view of life and God and salvation. And now Furman University, Mercer University, and for all practical purposes Sanford University, have stolen the schools away from the Baptist folks, sacrificed during the depression to keep the professors paid and keep the thing afloat, but it's just amazing. Harvard, Princeton, Yale, the same thing. Not Baptist folks in those cities but Bible believing people started those schools, and somehow as it goes along, we lose our base, and things go liberal and go secular. But when God returns, he's going to show the utter foolishness and idolatry and wickedness of putting God behind.

We live in that kind of culture. Scientists, the modern, modern scientists, they study the created world today, not to understand the majesty and glory of the Creator, and not to discover how to create better lives for people, but they actually use modern, modern science to try to find life itself. Have you noticed that? Nothing is really true anymore unless science says it's okay. You know, that's become the new god. "Oh, science says it. Then it's true." Like the ice age we were going to have when I was a boy and now the global warming thing we're going to have now that I'm older. If science says it, it has to be true. They have no regard for God's word and arrogantly believe in themselves and what they can discern with their puny, narrow, impotent abilities of observation. Do you know what I think God thinks about that? I think God thinks about that what the Psalmist said about it in Psalm 2:4, "He who sits in the heavens laughs. He who sits in the heavens laughs, and the Lord scoffs at them."

In the end, God will humble them and shame them all, or shame all before himself. His word will stand immutable, all-powerful and eternal, and all those that clinged and hoped in him will stand forever and all others will perish. So he's telling these believers, he's encouraging them, "Trust my word. Don't look at what's around you. Trust what I'm telling you." You see, by his word, all things exist. By his word, all things hold together. And by his word, all, one day all things will be completely obliterated and his word cannot and will not change.

Now, he continues on in verse 34, we're about done. He's telling the saints to be ready, "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." As a matter of fact, there's going to be a time period toward the end, where the antichrist is going to come forth and he's going to have such a promise to him. People will genuinely believe, "This guy is the answer." Have you ever watched the evening news and thought about, "How are we going to fix this Islamic, Muslim, and all these liberals and Bible believers? How are we going to get all of us together?" The antichrist is going to seem like the most brilliant and wonderful man. He's going to bring us all together and the world will cling to that. They'll think, "Finally, finally we have a champion who can take this global community and make us one and we'll have peace and we'll have safety." That's what I think the Lord is talking about here. "Be careful. Be careful. Listen to what my word says. Don't listen to that stuff."

He talks about them being weighed down. Sometimes we can get so concerned with things around us we forget the thing that matters the most. The word "dissipation" in verse 34, it means "to crowd out other more important concerns." The worries of life, the cares of life. By the way, you have to have energy on the cares of life. That's part of it, but the warning is, "Don't let the cares of life cause you to stop caring about what matters most." You know, for us today, then he says, drunkenness. Interesting that he mentions that. I think that covers a whole lot of things that we would do to numb ourselves from the reality around us. Somebody said you may die drunk, but you'll wake up stone cold sober in the face of God.

So we need to be ready as saints of God. This may not be specifically applicable to us but the truth is and that is to stay ready. You need to stay ready as a child of God. You need to read your Bible. You need to have your quiet time. You need to do your small group Sunday school lesson every week. You need to come to this worship service prayerfully, humbled and saying, "O God, preach the word to me today." Be vigilant. Be ready. Be steadfast. Don't be napping spiritually. You need to recommit yourself to God's church, to God's church. That's the, there are 1001 good Christian organizations but I can't find one of those in Scripture. It doesn't mean they are not important. We support many of them, but the Bible says the local church is the centerpiece of your walk with the Lord, your work with the Lord, and where you get strengthened in the Lord, and some of you today right here need to say, "I rededicate my life to be ready for my Lord and be ready by committing myself to his church." I make no apology for that. I'm helping you with that. Some of you need to be better about bringing tithes and offerings. You're not ready, you're not acting like you're ready. Be ready. Saints, be ready. This is a warning for all of us and a wake-up call for all of us.

He says in verse 34, that it will not come on you suddenly like a trap, and that's what's going to happen. Terrible things will be happening on the earth but most people are not looking for Jesus until suddenly he will come. I'm just going to skim through this, go on down to verse 36, if you will, "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." Here's what the Lord is saying, the Bible bears this out everywhere the last days are dealt with, listen to me: all true believers will be shown that they are true believers because they persevere until the Lord comes. They may struggle, they may fall, but they don't stay down. They persevere in their faith until the Lord returns.

James says it this way, James 1:12, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial," it's going to be a day of trial right before the Lord comes. You and I are entering into a time in this great country where true Bible believers are under trial. "For once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." So James says, "You'll know a true believer because they don't fall away when it gets tougher, when the culture is going the other way; when the mocking and the ridicule come, they don't fall away. They may struggle, they may have moments of doubt, but they don't fall away." There's a difference between struggling and having a moment of doubt and falling away. And James says, "You'll know they are a true believer because they'll make it to the end." That means that those who have been approved, that means

they have showed forth their faith was real. They weren't saved by their works, but the works show they had saving faith.

Then he says, "they will be given the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." The crown of life. It literally means the crown which exists in life. When Jesus returns one day, he'll glorify those remaining saints on the earth. They will be perfected like him. Just as he is, we will be, the Bible says. And they will be given eternal life. Everyone else receives eternal death. We are God's elect children. He has given us life. When we are born again, when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we become spiritual children and God lives in us, now listen, then we fight for life. We live this pilgrimage fighting against all the powers of the world, our own flesh and the devil, trying to pull us back into a secular, just materialistic view of life, "Just live for your lust. If it feels good, do it." All of that stuff, we fight against it. We come back to church. We repent again afresh. We get back on track. We stay in the fight. Did you hear me? Stay in the fight. Stay in the fight. Don't give up. I've been at this 35 years with you and I'm not quitting and you're not quitting either. We're staying in the fight to be spiritual men and women of God. God started this. He gave me life. He gives me the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We sharpen, help, challenge, reprove, rebuke, love, have compassion. We keep each other in the fight. Paul as he ended this life, he said, "I have fought the good fight." It's a fight. My old flesh is a fight. Don't you get sick of you? I get sick of you, why don't you get sick of you? Don't you get sick of me? I get sick of me, why don't you get sick of me? We get sick of our own flesh but we stay in the fight. He started this. He created this new life. We are created in Christ Jesus, the Bible says. We fight for life. And then one day Jesus is coming or we're raptured out to meet him in the air, or we die in him and then we're glorified and that's where we receive the crown of life that lasts forever and ever and ever.

So, stay faithful until he comes. I'm not giving up on you. I'm going to fight for you. If I find out you're slacking, I'm coming after you. Not because you're in trouble, because I love you and I want you to come after me if I need it, amen? We need each other to stay in the battle for the glory of God. Well, even so, come Lord Jesus.

We end with a very, very sobering, humbled spirit of just how magnanimous and overwhelming it's going to be when he unveils the truth of himself and returns to the earth. But we also end with unbelievable joy that by his grace we are one of his. He comes not to crush us, but to embrace us, and it's all, all, all grace. Amen?

Let's stand together.