

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon March 14, 2021
Luke 21: 34 – 36 “Take Heed, Watch and Pray Always”

5 Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 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." 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?" 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. 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."

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

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. 13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head shall be lost. 19 By your patience possess your souls.

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 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. 22 For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 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. 24 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.

25 "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; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

34 "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. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 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."

37 And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. 38 Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.

I. Introduction

- a. Today is our final sermon (the 8th sermon) in this section of Luke: the Olivet Discourse.
 - i. Luke 21:5-9 "1st Century Destruction of Herod's Temple"
 - ii. Luke 21:9,10 "1st Century Wars of Palestine"
 - iii. Luke 21:11 "1st Century Earthly Disasters and Heavenly Signs"
 - iv. Luke 21:12-19 "1st Century Persecution & Great Tribulation"
 - v. Luke 21:20-24 "1st Century Redemptive Judgment against Israel"
 - vi. Luke 21:25-28 "1st Century Hope in the midst of Widespread Panic"
 - vii. Luke 21:29-33 "1st Century Fig Tree Generation"
- b. The Signs of the coming destruction of the Temple
 - i. False Messiahs/False Movements v8
 - ii. Wars/Uprisings v9-10
 - iii. Great Earthquakes, Famines, Pestilences, Fearful Sights and Great Signs in the heavens v11
 - iv. Persecution by Jews and Romans v12-19
 - v. Jerusalem surrounded by armies/time to flee v20-24
 - vi. Signs in heavens/distress on earth- v25,26
 - vii. Then comes the Son of Man's Redemptive Judgment v27,28
 - viii. Fig Tree Parable, Definitive Timing v29-33
 - ix. Take Heed, Watch and Pray Always: Be ready for that Day v34-36
- c. My approach to today's text:
 - i. I believe today's text, like the preceding verses in the Olivet Discourse, are referring to Christ's coming in judgment in the events surrounding the AD70 destruction of the temple.
 - ii. DeMar "The New Testament does use the *near* and *soon* coming of Jesus *in judgment* as a way of spurring the church on to greater works. The near judgment spoken of in Scripture refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, not a distant future coming of Christ. Peter wrote, "The end of all things *is at hand*; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer" (1 Peter 4:7). At hand for whom? If words mean anything, then Peter must have had his contemporary readers in mind. What end was he describing? In Luke's Gospel we read Jesus saying, "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that *you* may have strength to escape all these things that *are about to take place*, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36)."¹

¹ DeMar, G. (1999). [*Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*](#) (Fourth revised edition, p. 30). Powder Springs, GA: American Vision.

- iii. Demar “Luke’s account of the Olivet Discourse confirms that the generation Jesus had in mind was the generation to whom He was speaking: “But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that *you* may have strength to escape all these things that *are about to take place*, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36). Once we determine the meaning of “you,” we can resolve the meaning of “this generation.” Clearly, Luke 21:36 refers to those to whom Jesus spoke, the same group Jesus told to “keep on the alert” and to pray. Jesus confirmed the nearness of the unfolding of the events by telling His listeners that the cataclysm was “about to take place.””²
 - d. Luke 21: 34 – 36 “Take Heed, Watch and Pray Always”
 - i. About that Day v34,35,36
 - 1. Comes Unexpectedly for the distracted
 - 2. A snare for those who aren’t ready
 - 3. An Escape is available for those counted worthy
 - 4. The Day of the Son of Man: some may stand before Christ
 - ii. Preparing for that Day v34,36
 - 1. Take heed to yourselves
 - 2. Watch
 - 3. Pray Always
 - iii. Questions to know, love and obey God
- II. About that Day v34,35,36
 - a. 34 "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. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 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."
 - b. Comes Unexpectedly for the distracted v34b
 - i. “that Day come on you unexpectedly”
 - ii. For those who are unaware or distracted, the Day of Christ’s judgment upon Israel will come unexpectedly. What will occur when Christ begins His judgment upon Israel?
 - 1. V20-24 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 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. 22 For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 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. 24 And they

² DeMar, G. (1999). [*Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*](#) (Fourth revised edition, p. 184). Powder Springs, GA: American Vision.

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.”

- iii. So, Jesus was warning His disciples at that time that those who are unaware or distracted will be caught up in this “great distress in the land”. Instead of escaping, they will be swept away by the “wrath upon this people”, and along with apostate Israel, they would “fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all the nations.” The distracted or unaware followers of Christ could end up “trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”
- c. A snare for those who aren’t ready v35
 - i. “For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.”
 - ii. Snare: snare, trap, noose
 - 1. of snares in which birds are entangled and caught
 - a. implies unexpectedly, suddenly, because birds and beasts are caught unawares
 - 2. a snare, i.e. whatever brings peril, loss, destruction
 - a. of a sudden and unexpected deadly peril
 - 3. Like animals unaware of a trap, apostate Israel will be going on about their normal lives, blind to their coming sudden peril.
 - iii. “All those who dwell on the face of the whole earth”
 - 1. “earth”
 - a. arable land
 - b. the ground, the earth as a standing place
 - c. the main land as opposed to the sea or water
 - d. the earth as a whole
 - e. the earth as opposed to the heavens
 - f. the inhabited earth, the abode of men and animals
 - g. a country, land enclosed within fixed boundaries, a tract of land, territory, region
 - 2. Within the context of the Olivet Discourse, this word “earth” must be interpreted as the land of Israel.
 - a. Demar “The “coming” of “the Son of Man” is most often taught as a worldwide event since Jesus states that “all the tribes of the *earth* will mourn” (Matt. 24:30). Again, most Bible translations do not capture the true meaning of the Greek. A better translation is “tribes of the land,” indicating that the event is restricted to Israel since Israel is the topic of discussion. The Greek word often translated “earth” can also be translated “soil” (Matt. 13:5, 8, 23), “ground” or “dirt” (25:25), “land” (countryside: 27:45), “Earth” (world: 16:10), or the “land of Israel” (2:6, 20–21), depending on the context. Since “tribes” is used in conjunction with land in Matthew 24:30, “land [of Judea]” is the best translation... Earlier in Matthew 24, Jesus

warned His audience to flee “Judea” (24:16) when they saw the “abomination of desolation” (24:15), or as Luke describes it, “Jerusalem surrounded by armies” (Luke 21:20). Only those near enough to the temple would be able to see the “abomination of desolation ... standing in the holy place.” The Olivet Discourse was not a message to the world (*kosmos*); it was a warning to the tribes of Israel that dwelled in the land as part of that first-century generation.”³

- iv. So, the entire nation of Israel is in view. Every apostate Jew is in danger of God’s outpoured wrath via the Roman legions.
- d. An Escape is available for those counted worthy v36a
 - i. “you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass”
 - ii. “Counted worthy to escape”
 1. The unbelieving Jews, caught up in their pride, hypocrisy and self-reliance, are not worthy to escape God’s judgment. They have earned God’s judgment and are blind to their plight. Believing in their own worthiness, they remain in their own sin. This will end up blinding them to the Roman noose God would tighten around their nation’s neck.
 2. Conversely, Jesus said in Luke 6:20 “Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God.” Those who belong to God are born again from above by God’s Holy Spirit. This new life from God brings deep awareness of our own unworthiness before God. Our sin and guilt before God’s holiness brings each of us, personally, before God’s worthiness and our own earned judgment. We are unworthy in ourselves. Christ alone is worthy. And we worship Him.
 - a. Rev 5 “And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. 4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. 5 But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” 6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which

³ DeMar, G. (1999). [*Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*](#) (Fourth revised edition, p. 166). Powder Springs, GA: American Vision.

are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." 11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" 14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever."

3. Enduring great trials with constant faith and worship toward Christ bears the fruit of transformation. He molds His character in us. By His Life in us, He makes us worthy in Him.
 - a. Romans 5:1-5 "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- iii. All these things that will come to pass
 1. "all these things" – clearly a reference to all Jesus has spoken to them since they asked about when the temple would be destroyed
 2. "that will come to pass" = that are about to come to pass
 - a. to be on the point of doing or suffering something

- e. The Day of the Son of Man: some may stand before Christ v36b
 - i. Christ promises His disciples that in Him, walking closely with Him, not drifting away, He will see them through the trials in His worthiness, and unlike the Jews, His followers will be His friends, and they will not flee from Him in fear, but will rather stand before Him as they escape His wrath upon the Jews.
- III. Preparing for that Day v34,36
 - a. 34 "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. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 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."
 - b. Take heed to yourselves v34a
 - i. to turn the mind to, attend to, be attentive
 - ii. to attend to one's self, i.e. to give heed to one's self
 - iii. In the midst of all of these terrifying unfolding signs, Christ warns His disciples not to be over-focused on those events, but instead to always be watchful over the state of their own souls.
 - c. What are the specific threats Christ lays out for His disciples to avoid?
 - i. Hearts weighed down – Jesus goes on to list the ways that our hearts can get weighed down. Our affections and goals can be drawn away from Christ, and our Lord warns His disciples about this. Those very disciples following Jesus at that moment, so filled with love and devotion to Him, could drift away from Him. How much more so us?
 - ii. Carousing – used only here in NT
 - 1. the giddiness and headache caused by drinking wine to excess
 - 2. Our hearts can be weighed down by the negative physical effects of drugs and alcohol. Jesus is warning His disciples of how such drugs can dull our senses and impede watchfulness.
 - iii. Drunkenness
 - 1. This is beyond the giddiness associated with carousing. The mind and the body are controlled by the drug, and we are left without our good sense. Such living obviously leaves one unable to stay watchful.
 - iv. Cares of this life – cares, anxieties
 - 1. We all need food, clothing, water and shelter. Security is important. Income is needed.
 - 2. But, Christ warns His disciples that they can become too focused upon obtaining and keeping these things. This over-focus shifts our reliance away from God our Father's provision and onto ourselves or others. This dulls our awareness of surrounding events.
 - d. Watch therefore v36a

- i. to be sleepless, keep awake, watch
- ii. to be circumspect, attentive, ready
- iii. Because so many will miss the Day and because we are all so prone to drift away from Christ, our Lord warns His disciples to not only take heed of themselves, but also to be on the watch for the signs He has given them in this Olivet Discourse. He warns them because they can drift away if not vigilant.
- iv. This kind of watchfulness is dependent upon knowledge. The disciples must know what to watch for. So, they must be sure to memorize and understand the coming signs, so they would know when to flee. They must warn and teach those around them, especially those who did not hear these words from Jesus Himself.
- e. Pray Always v36a
 - i. to desire, long for
 - ii. to ask, beg
 - iii. to pray, make supplications
 - iv. always: at all times, in every situation, as a way of daily living and thinking
 - v. Luke 18:1-8 "1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' " 6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

IV. Questions to know, love and obey God