

## SIGNS OF THE END

**Luke 21:5-36**

In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge captures the thought of the mariner, caught in a storm at sea:

***“Water, water everywhere; and not a drop to drink!”***

Similarly, during the exile, at stormy times in Israel's history, and during end times, people might appropriately think:

***“Prophets, prophets everywhere; and not a word from God!”***

Very few prophets worth following!”

I never cease to be amazed at the confusion people create when they work with a passage without allowing its simple message to sink in first.

I hear more nonsense concerning today's passage, and parallels in Matthew and Mark, than I care to remember.

In approaching our Lord's Words, let the plain sense sink in, before we let *our* theological grid take control and confuse everything; or try to fit current events into *OUR* scheme.

We want to pick up the thread of our Lord's words, where we left off last week.

We didn't quite finish last week's message.

We want to finish the first part of the passage, then move on to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of our Lord's teaching to His followers.

### **JESUS HEADED TOWARD THE CROSS 19:28-23:56**

Formal presentation 19:28-48

Official opposition develops 20-21

### **JUDGMENT PROVOKED BY OPPOSITION 21:5-36**

Stage 1: Immediate Judgment 5-24

Stage 2: End-of-the-Age Judgment 24-36

### **IMMEDIATE JUDGMENT 5-24**

Destruction of the temple 5-6

Persecution of Jesus' followers 7-19

**3 things which characterize THE END:**

1. **International conflicts** 10 Wars
2. **Natural tragedies** 11a Earthquakes, famines, etc.
3. **Unnatural signs** 11b Frightening signs in heaven

**Answer to their question 20-24**

“What's the sign these things are about to happen? =>20

*“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by enemies”*

**How are God's people to act  
in the midst of such troubling times?**

**Trust God.**

**Be faithful to Him.**

Things aren't out of His control!

**Use affliction as launch pad for witnessing!**

**Sometimes God intervenes and saves people.**

In **Uganda on April 12, 1978**, Idi Amin's soldiers fired at the Makerere Gospel Mission, a Uganda Church near Kampala. With bullets ricocheting and tearing holes in walls and roof, 600 people fell to their knees and began to praise God. Soldiers arrested and beat 200 of them and dragged them off to the Nakesero State Research Bureau headquarters, where thousands of Ugandans had already lost their lives.

They sat huddled in a circle with gasoline cans around them. They were told they'd be burned alive. Soldiers said they're awaiting the order by a high-ranking official. It turned out that the officer had an automobile accident, which the people took as God's intervention on their behalf.

**Sometimes God *doesn't* choose to intervene.**

Heb. 11 –Some miraculously delivered ...

*"But others, ..." (11:35) died terrible deaths.*

Either way **God wins!**

No objective reason for difference.

God chooses what will glorify Him.

"Why does God let these things happen to us?

Life used to be so simple.

Now it seems everything's falling apart! Why?"

One reason is for a launching pad for witness!

--an opportunity to share His love with others.

**TWO MAIN AUDIENCES** to whom message is addressed:

**It's addressed to those who reject God's Son.**

**Warning:** You may win the debate  
and conquer the opposition today.

But payday WILL come someday.

Eventually God's judgment falls

–as it did on that generation

When God's day comes,

those who fought His Son, will face His judgment.

*Do you prefer to win the world, or to gain your own soul?*

**It's also addressed to those whose world seems upside down.**

You trusted Christ.

You thought you would *"live happily ever after"*

But it hasn't worked out that way.

If passage indicates anything about God's people and pop culture, it indicates our culture will never join us.

Israel's roots are founded on a personal relationship with God; Jesus warns those who follow Him that family and friends will turn on them on His account.

If we follow Him, we'll be counter-cultural;

we can be sure those near us won't like it!

(No matter what culture we live in!)

*How do we respond to Him?*

*Can we trust Him?*

*Can affliction be launching pad for witness?*

**Children of the heavenly Father**

Safely in His bosom gather;

Nestling bird nor star in heaven

Such a refuge e'er was given.

God His own doth tend and nourish,

In His holy courts they flourish;

From all evil things He spares them,

In His mighty arms He bears them.

Neither life nor death shall ever  
 From the Lord His children sever;  
 Unto them His grace He showeth,  
 And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Though He giveth or He taketh,  
 God His children ne'er forsaketh;  
 His the loving purpose solely  
 To preserve them pure and holy.

## **Stage 2: End-of-the-Age Judgment 24-36**

The disciples have just asked when the temple will be destroyed — What sign they should watch for.

Jesus responds that following persecution, they should watch for foreign armies to surround the city, and then get out!

From that day forward, Jerusalem will be trampled on by Gentiles until the pagans' days are over.

We observed last week that the campaign our Lord referred to occurred in A.D. 70; trampling by pagans has been taking place since.

Jesus describes what those final days will look like:

Scary times lie ahead.

They'll make men and nations panic.

Don't let their panic get to you!

*What to them is a **sign of anxiety**,  
 is for you a **sign of deliverance**.*

In the world, these scary signs provoke fear and terror.

For us, they are evidence that our Deliverer is coming.

Instead of panic, when you see the signs,  
 look up and pray for deliverance.

That, in a nutshell, is the message of the passage

## **REVELATION OF SUPERNATURAL SIGNS 21:24-28**

**Continuous affliction of Jerusalem 21:23-24** *"There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners in all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."*

Jerusalem will be trampled on until the "**pagans' days**" end  
 => "the Times of the Gentiles").

In "**God's day**" it will be different (=> "the Day of the Lord")

How will we know when God's day is about to begin?

Glad you asked!

## **REVELATION OF SUPERNATURAL SIGNS of the end 21:25-28**

**Significance for the lost 21:25-27** *"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."*

In God's day there will be supernatural signs

**Isa. 13:6-13** *"Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. 7 Because of this. All hands will go limp. Every man's heart will melt. 8 Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. 9 See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. 10 The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. 11 I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. 12 I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. 13 Therefore, I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of his burning anger."*

Times of supernatural darkness and other celestial evidences that God is intervening supernaturally will be seen in the heavens and on earth.

Those frightening signs will alert man that Christ is about to come in power and great glory to redeem His people from their oppressed state.

When people see awesome signs, they panic.

Everything seems out of control!

**Zella's panic** in an airplane. She just wanted to keep her feet on solid ground.

And then the earth moved!!!

**What can you trust?** . . . if the earth quakes, the seas are roaring and tossing, the heavens are falling apart and its pieces smashing into the earth?

All the things you rely on as stable and secure, fall apart.

Then where do you turn for security?

That's what times will be like!

Jesus says, when you see such terrifying things,

***lift up your heads!***

Nations will be in anguish and perplexed.

People will faint from terror; they'll be worried sick.

The nations have never known a time of panic like this.

**Revelation 6:12-17** tells us that people will cry out for the rocks to fall on them—to hide from the wrath of God. **This will be your worst horror movie, come to life!**

**These events are a SIGN OF JUDGMENT for the lost.**

They still don't turn to God!

Climaxed by sign—Son of Man in the heavens,  
announcing His return.

In darkness, perhaps, the sky may suddenly be illuminated by His glory!

It will catch everyone's attention like a lightning bolt in the night sky!

When you see these awesome signs—

**Don't panic! Look up!**

**SIGNIFICANCE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE 21:28**

*"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."*

Things that alarm people are signs of deliverance for His followers

**They will be a SIGN OF DELIVERANCE for God's people.**

When everyone's distressed, we know God works all things "according to the counsel of His will."

We can trust Him and not be afraid.

These events remind us His coming is near; we can be encouraged as we **look up and wait for His return.**

**Spurgeon:** "You ask, perhaps, 'How shall we do that?' You cannot do it without your Lord. With God, all things are possible. In Christ, you can do all things; without Him, you can do nothing. If you live away from your Lord and Master, in those days of terror that are yet to come, your hearts will quail for fear and you will be like other men. If you run with them, you will fear with them. If your strength is where there strength is, you shall be as weak as they; but if you have learned to look up, why, even in those stormy times you shall keep the habit of looking up; and if you have learned to lift your heads above the world, you shall keep to the habit of lifting up your heads. If your portion is in heaven, it shall not be shaken when the earth rocks and reels to its very foundations; if your treasure is in heaven, then your treasure shall not be lost."

His coming is even sooner than these verses indicate.

These are signs of His return to establish His kingdom.

Message is for those awaiting God's program for Israel.

He may come at any moment for His church

No signs are needed.

As we see these signs we can be assured

we're even closer to His coming for the church.

## **MEANING OF SUPERNATURAL SIGNS 21:29-33**

### **Illustration from the fig tree 21:29-30**

*"He told them this parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.'"*

It doesn't take a lot of profound study to figure out what Jesus is saying:

Hendriksen: "The branch of a fig tree becomes soft and tender because of the sap that is swelling within it. It is not surprising, therefore, that soon this branch is generating leaves, and still more leaves. Now when this happens to a fig tree—or, for that matter, to fruit trees in general—the disciples realize that summer is near."

When trees "put out" [sap or leaves {?}],  
you know summer isn't far behind!

**You see the sap or the leaves**

**You know summer's coming**

Parable is much like: "April showers bring May flowers."

Remember the song?

"When April showers come your way,  
they bring the flowers that bloom in May. . . .

So when you see clouds, upon the hills,  
you soon will see floods, of daffodils."

Those who see these signs are assured their generation will witness return of Christ to establish His kingdom.

Popular misinterpretation: The restoration of the fig tree (= Israel), = that generation will see His coming—the basis for 1948+40-7=1981 for Christ's return for church.

I said back in '76—it doesn't say "when you see the fig tree restored." It says "learn a lesson from the fig tree."

We don't accept allegorical interpretation!

This is an illustration and it is figurative.

That *doesn't* mean any old figurative meaning will do!

When all else fails, ask *the speaker* what the figure means. Jesus tells us.

Why do people look for more?

Can't we take *Jesus'* Word for what He means?!!!

**Lesson from the fig tree 21:31**

*“Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near.”*

Just as trees put out leaves before fruit, so His coming has antecedents that are visible in advance.

When you see these things happening (Matt. adds "ALL these things!")

What things? The ones described in vv. 25-26!

**You see the awesome supernatural signs**

**You know the kingdom (His coming) is near**

*Don't panic. Look up! Your redemption is near.* the completion of all that was promised that we have been waiting for.

*Don't panic.* These things are advance signal that God is in control and is about to fulfill what He promised.

*Know that the world isn't coming to an end.*

You won't die—at least your generation won't be eliminated by these frightening events!

*Know that the Kingdom of God is near!*

***Look up! We don't have to fear!***

Our Lord's coming is near.

Get ready! Look up! He's coming soon!