

Luke 21:5-36 New International Version (NIV)

Prophecy of the Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the Return of Jesus Christ

Note: all text in red is our own explanation, with which many Bible commentaries will concur with.

⁵Some of his [Jesus] disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ⁶“As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.”

⁷“Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

[Note the disciples asked two questions. In the parallel account in Matthew’s record in 24:3 the question is phrased slightly differently Mt 24:3 “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” This helps us to understand the answers that Jesus gave. In the first part of the question the disciples were asking about the destruction of the Temple, in the second part the question focuses on his coming to the world at the end of the age (or era/current system of things). So, Jesus goes on to give a summary of what is going to happen until he comes.]

⁸He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them. ⁹When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.”

¹⁰Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences [diseases/pandemics] in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

[Now Jesus winds his prophecy back and says but before all this—indicating that the following things he speaks about are earlier. In fact, verses 12-24 are warning his disciples about what was to shortly come to pass to them and to Jerusalem. All these things came to pass with the Roman and Jewish persecutions of the early Christians.]

¹²“But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. ¹³And so you will bear testimony to me. ¹⁴But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷Everyone will hate you because of me. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹Stand firm, and you will win life.

[Now comes a very sad prophecy, foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem from AD 70 to AD 100. This was a time of a long siege and starvation. Jerusalem was then ruled over by Gentiles and the remaining Jews were scattered throughout the Roman Empire.]

²⁰“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. ²²For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. ²³How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. ²⁴They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

[The times of the Gentiles are fulfilled were finally fulfilled 1967 when Israel took control of Jerusalem and in 2017 President Trump recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Now Jesus goes on to focus on the end of the age, which we believe we are living in today. Please read on, these words are so important]

²⁵“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. ²⁶People 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 [Jesus uses this title of himself] coming in a cloud with power and great glory.** ²⁸When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” ²⁹He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹**Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.**

³²“Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

[Jesus is warning all those that know this prophecy and emphasising the absolute certainty of his return to the earth. He then warns those who believe in him not to get caught up with the fear of the world and day to day living in place of watching and being ready for his return. Jesus singles out the fig tree we think because the Bible uses the it as a symbol of Israel and Israel did indeed sprout in 1948 as it became a nation, after thousands of years. Notice other trees also sprouted leaves – alongside Israel in the post war period many other nations came into being.]

³⁴“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

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The destruction of Jerusalem came to pass just as Jesus said it would. Jerusalem is no longer trodden down by any other nations — it is now Israel’s capital. The return of the Jews to set up Israel was also prophesied and is one of the great signs in the Bible. We can therefore be confident that this prophecy will be completely fulfilled with the return of Jesus. He will come to raise the dead and judge the earth, as King of God’s worldwide Kingdom on earth. Please read the accompanying article on our home page entitled “The coming Kingdom of God on Earth”