

Luke 21:20-33 – The Days of Vengeance

I. Introduction

- We live in a fallen, broken, and dangerous world. This could give us reason to fear the future.
- Let us take hold of two important facts:
 - God knows all things.
 - God directs all things.
- This passage is Luke's version of the "Olivet Discourse"
 - Compare with Matthew 24 and Mark 13
- The earlier section of the passage (vs. 5-19) gave us signs of the times relevant to the impending destruction and judgment of AD 70.
- This passage has relevance first and foremost to the first century, culminating in the events of AD 70.
- By extension, it has application for us as we anticipate the second coming of Christ in the midst of similar signs throughout human history.

II. The Destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 20-24)

- Matthew 24 and Mark 13 both transition from AD 70 events into a description of the final, second coming of Christ. Luke's version, however, focuses more so on the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.
- Various Jewish insurrections took place during the 1st century AD. From AD 66-70, the Jews were at war with the Romans, eventually leading to the defeat of the Jews, and the downfall of Jerusalem in AD 70.
- The topic of Jerusalem's impending destruction is mentioned repeatedly in Luke:
 - Luke 19:41-44
 - Luke 23:27-31
- We live in perilous times as well, with similar signs in modern history, as well as similar dangers. We are called to patient endurance in the midst of suffering and persecution.
- The "times of the Gentiles" are prophesied by the Lord as beginning when Jerusalem fell.
 - Luke 21:24
 - Compare with Rom. 11:25-26
- The times and seasons are in God's hands. Let us focus on the work that God has given us to do. He will take care of all the future details, unknown to us.

III. The Coming of the Son of Man (vs. 25-28)

- Some principles on interpreting prophetic language:
 - It is easier to see how a prophecy was fulfilled after it occurs.
 - Sometimes, prophetic descriptions have multiple fulfillments in history.
 - Prophetic language can be better understood by comparing Scripture with Scripture
- Consider the following prophetic passages that help to explain the apocalyptic, world-shaking language of these verses.
 - Isa. 13:9-11
 - Isa. 34:4, 9-10
 - Ezek. 32:7-8
 - Dan. 8:9-11
- It is my view that the "coming" described in vs. 27 is referring to the events of AD 70.
 - Matt. 10:23

- Luke 20:15-16
- Dan. 7:13-14 compared with Matt. 26:63-64
- Let us always remember, as we experience history in our lives, that King Jesus is on the throne. He is seated at God's right hand. Nothing can thwart His plans. And nothing can thwart His promises to us, whom He has loved!

IV. The Parable of the Fig Tree (vs. 29-33)

- The Parable of the Fig Tree is given to remind the disciples to watch for the signs He gave. These signs would give them a sense of how near the fulfillment of these prophecies were.
- Vs. 32 gives a time window for the fulfillment of this prophecy: it would happen within one generation. The most natural way to read this is descriptive of a 40-year generation (i.e. those presently living when Jesus gave the prophecy)
 - Matt. 23:35-38 compared with Matt. 24:34
- We are encouraged to trust Jesus' words, because what He said would happen, came to pass exactly as He said it would.
- Three relevant applications as we apply the principles of this passage:
 - 1. Do not be afraid. King Jesus is in control.
 - 2. Be busy with the things King Jesus gave you to do.
 - 3. Be watchful, anticipating, and ready for the Lord's coming.

Supplementary Material

Jewish Historian Josephus' recounting of astronomical phenomenon in AD 70:

Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. (Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, 6.289)

Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius [equivalent to March/April], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. (Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, 6.296-299)

R.T. France, commentator, summarizes how to understand the "coming" language of vs. 27:

The time of the temple's destruction will also be the time when it will become clear that the Son of Man, rejected by the leaders of his people, has been vindicated and enthroned at the right hand of God, and that it is he who is now to exercise the universal kingship which is his destiny. That is how Daniel's vision is to be fulfilled. (R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, p. 924)

Jesus' words here suggest then, in the light of their OT background, that the people of Jerusalem will recognize what they have done to their Messiah, but their mourning will be prompted by seeing his eventual vindication and triumph, when it will be too late to avert the consequences of having rejected him. (R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, p. 925)