



False Alarms, False Idols & True Hope Luke 21:5-9

Intro: It would be easier, wouldn't it, if Jesus simply and only asked for our money, or our service? As moderns, we all appreciate a good tally, a score to know where we stand and how we are doing, like a half-time score or a mid-semester grade. Instead, the command is to love God with our whole being and to live a poor widow's life, wholly cast on God alone. How do grade that? You don't. You turn your face to Jesus and focus only on him.

To prepare for what is about to face them, and what they will face throughout their lifetimes, Jesus begins to warn Israel, and the disciples, of what is to come and the care they must exercise about false alarms and false idols. It's a warning for us too.

Most of all, he calls them to the "poor widow's" life; a life without "terror" (v 9b). They can live like this because their lives are wholly cast on God alone and not institutions, people or world events. What would that kind of life look like for you? Let's start with what we are all tempted to trust in, instead of Jesus -

First: Admiration of the Temple (v. 5)

*And while some were speaking of the temple,
how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings*

John MacArthur says this event happened on Wednesday of Passion Week, as Jesus left the Temple for the Mount of Olives where he gives his famous Olivet Discourse, most famously recounted in Matthew 25-26.

- a) People marveled at the Temple's beauty, wealth, and permanence. Herod's Temple was enormous, dazzling with marble and gold, considered one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Picture of [Temple](#) – (Also see end of notes)

Its beauty and grandeur were legendary. Begun in 20 BC, it had been under construction for almost 50 years and in Jesus' day, the entire compound covered a sixth of the city. With its white marble walls and gold details, it was described as a "mountain covered with snow." To the Jewish mind, it symbolized God's dwelling and security for the nation.

Note/Picture. When you visit the city today, you can still see the [Western Wall](#) stones that comprised the foundation and surrounded the city.

The Jews remembered promises like *Zechariah 12:8-9 - On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. ⁹ And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

But tended to overlook passages like *Zechariah 14:1-2a - Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken...*

Just as God always does, he saves through judgement. In judging the Temple, God is providing salvation for Israel, requiring them to look beyond the Temple and elsewhere for their salvation.

APP: We all hold up people, institutions and nations that provide security for us. Recent times have proven that there is little security in these things.

- The Stackler family, of Purdue Pharma, with their names on buildings at Harvard and Oxford, has learned this.
- The descendants of Southern Civil War soldiers have learned this.
- Delta Airlines is celebrating its 100th birthday but who remembers TWA, Pan Am, or Piedmont?

We too quickly pledge our allegiance and place our hope in things and people who can't do for us what only God can do.

IMP APP: Please understand this is true about everyone of us. We are always assigning worth to the world around us. Either consciously or subconsciously, we are saying, *"This is important to me. This influences me. This carries weight in my life."* We are either being shaped by Christ or something else. Anything else can be an idol if it becomes more important to us than Jesus. This is true of our politics, our religion, our family,

Do you know why we do this? Because God has set eternity in our hearts (Ecc 3:11). The echo of Eden is deep inside us. It's an inborn sense that life is bigger than what we see. We all long for something beyond us but only Jesus defines it for us. In the interim, we are all looking for an eternal relationship and our permanent home.

This misplaced desire is what makes us so "needy." We grasp, we hold onto, etc., anything we can find to fill the God-hole, but the harder we try, the worse our heartache becomes as everything we trust, fails us.

God has warned us –

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 - For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

Do you see the rhythm of sunrise and sunset, of Spring and Winter, of life and death? Why are we so surprised? Because we will not let go of forever.

So, Jesus took the thing every Jew loved and depended on to teach this important object lesson. Even the most impressive structures, like the Temple, are temporary and cannot save.

APP: If you really love something or someone, don't idolize it. God may prove to you it cannot save you.

Only God's kingdom endures forever. And so, like everything else in our lives....

Second: Jesus Predicts the Temple's Destruction (v. 6)

he said, ⁶ "As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

a) In this statement, Jesus jolts everyone listening to him.

I'm not sure we can understand the shock value of this prophecy. It's more than the Twin Towers, or the Pentagon. The White House might be similar except the Temple was where/how the Jews related to God and that's vastly more than a political building.

APP: What is your Temple? What institution, agenda or person so consumes your horizon that their loss is unimaginable?

b) This prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70, when the Romans sacked Jerusalem and leveled the Temple.

1 – The reason the Temple was destroyed

- In AD 66, Jewish zealots revolted against Roman rule. They stopped paying tribute, drove out Roman forces, and even killed Roman garrisons.
- This was seen as outright rebellion against Rome and intolerable in the eyes of the empire. Israel had to be made an example.
- Vespasian (Titus's father) was sent to crush the revolt, but when Titus became emperor in AD 69 ("Year of the Four Emperors"), he took command.

2 – The Siege of Jerusalem

- In spring AD 70, Titus led four legions against Jerusalem, which was torn by civil war among Jewish factions (zealots, Sicarii, moderates).
- About 960 Jews fled Rome and found refuge at Masada.
- The Romans besieged the city, cutting off supplies. Famine and disease decimated the population.
- Josephus, an eyewitness (a Jewish commander who defected to Rome), records horrific suffering, including cannibalism inside the walls.

3 – The Destruction of the Temple and City

- In August AD 70, Roman forces breached the city.
- Despite Titus reportedly wanting to preserve the Temple (Josephus, a Jewish historian, says he gave orders to spare it), the soldiers set fire to it amid the

chaos. (*I love how one Emperor tried to save the Temple, but another Emperor had already prophesied its destruction and the former Emperor (Jesus) won!*)

- The Temple was burned and leveled; not one stone was left upon another (fulfilling Jesus' prophecy in Luke 21:6).
- According to Josephus, when the Temple caught fire, the gold from its interior melted, and ran down into the cracks between the stones.
- Roman soldiers, greedy for the gold, pried apart the stones to recover it.
- The rest of the city was systematically destroyed, and survivors were killed, enslaved, or dispersed.

4 – The Results

- Punishment for rebellion: Jerusalem was the epicenter of the Jewish revolt, so Rome wanted to make an example.
- Political stability: Crushing the revolt reasserted Roman dominance over the volatile province of Judea.
- Military triumph: The destruction became Titus's greatest military victory, celebrated in Rome with the Arch of Titus, which still stands.

Picture: Of the [arch](#) and of the [Menorah](#) being carried away from the Temple.

Religious-symbolic impact: Destroying the Temple undercut Jewish national identity and independence. It marked the end of Temple-based worship in Judaism.

Note: Thank God for the Gospel's genealogies. All Jewish genealogical records were destroyed in 70 AD but we know Jesus' lineage.

Here's how the writer of Hebrews tried to encourage and warn new Hebrew Christians –

Hebrews 12:23-31 - *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. ²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [the Temple] ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know him who*

said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

We don't need a Temple. Jesus is our Temple.

John 2:18-21 - So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?"¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

Revelation 21:22 - And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

Third: The Disciples' Questions (v. 7)

And they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"

They ask: *When? What sign?* They want a timetable and clear indications. But it's important for Jesus' response to note they are asking two different questions.

- a) When will these things be?
- b) What will be the sign when these things are about to take place?

Notice that Jesus' answer does not concern itself with time.

How many of Jesus's warnings were about time?

Luke 12:39-40 - ...if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Luke 12:46 - ...the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know...

The parable of the talents in Matthew 24 and the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.

In total, Jesus uses about 5–6 parables/sayings that explicitly warn about *time*, emphasizing that the exact hour of His coming is hidden, so disciples must live in constant readiness.

And yet, we seem to be fascinated by the time, more than the warnings against time and for readiness.

APP: We are to live every day like this could be the day Jesus returns. Live like today could be the day Jesus returns. It could be!

Fourth: Jesus' Warning Against Deception (vv. 8–9a)

*And he said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them.
⁹ And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once."*

Instead of focusing on the quantity of time, Jesus focuses on the quality of time. Not, "Here's how long you have to live but here's how to live in the time you have."

a) *"Don't be led astray."*

b) False messiahs will arise. People will claim, *"I am he!"* or *"The time is now!"*

Note: Do you see how these two answers, answer the two questions the disciples asked?

- V 7 ...when shall these things be? V 8b – *"The time is at hand."*
- V 7 - ...what shall be the sign? V 8a – *"Many will come in my name..."*

In Acts 5:36-37, Gamaliel says, *"Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered."*

- V 9a *"And when you hear of wars and tumults"* = national and natural calamities.

What's the deal here? Why do we put hope in things and people? We need forever. And in its place, we find temporary comfort in false Messiahs. Think about the unending list of things we hope will bring us happiness?

Everything from new purchases to diets, exercise, and new bodies, TV programs to distract us from Jesus; jobs, cars, houses, jobs, spouses, children, FB, Instagram, X, sports. Barak Obama, Donald Trump, bosses, friends, husbands, wives, etc. It is unlikely that any of us are going to believe people are Jesus, but we do hope in these things and people, don't we?

You can't blame the 'thing.' James 1:14 teaches us that *"each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire."*

Ecclesiastes teaches us these things have their place in our lives but not the place we often give them. Ultimately, only Jesus can save us.

Wars, unrest, and false Messiahs will come. V 9 – *"...for these things must first take place..."* Why? Because we live in a fallen world and will devise our own demise (look at the present U.S.) unless Jesus saves us.

But these are not the immediate signs of the end. – v 9c – *"....but the end will not be at once."*

In the 1st century, wars raged across the Roman empire. Every generation in memory had seen false messiahs and endured conflict. War was the norm more than the exception and uncertainty ruled Jewish everyday life more than certainty.

The early church would soon face state-sponsored persecution through Roman emperors like Nero and Domitian.

Believers are not to live in the terror of wars or unrest. The world does not have the final word.

Our greatest danger isn't terror or war but discernment; being misled by false teaching and saviors. But this can only happen if we take our eyes off the Jesus of the Bible.

Fifth: Don't Be Afraid. 9b

Jesus basically says,

- a) *"Don't be fooled – v 8 – "...don't go after them..."*
- b) *"and don't be afraid." – v 9 – "do not be terrified."*

Most of us are not foolish but we are fearful.

This is the key to the passage. This is how Jesus calls us to live until he returns....*fearless*.

Does this describe your life? Why not? Perhaps your life is half cast on Jesus and half on the world; something or someone in the world. You trust Jesus but still go to the Temple.

Note: There's a reason Luke has arranged his material as he has. The previous story about the widow is not only in juxtaposition to the hypocrisy of the scribes but to Israel's trust in the Temple.

Here's what you've done. You have cast in 1 lepta, and kept the other for a rainy day. You trust Jesus, but you want an insurance policy...just in case. But what will you do when your Temple falls and your Menorah gets carried away?

That's a fearful life.

APP: Ask yourself, "*What am I afraid of?*" That's your god.

T - Psalm 13 (if there's time).

Conclusion/Gospel: The saddest thing may be that while the people were adoring the temple, they were ignoring the true Temple, Jesus. But, like crossing the street, you can't look both ways at the same time.

What's the remedy? Live like a poor widow! Wholly cast your life on God alone.

That's how we avoid false alarms, false idols and have true hope!



Observation

(What does the text say?)

1. What were some people in the temple admiring in verse 5?
2. How does Jesus respond to their admiration of the temple (v. 6)?
3. What questions do the disciples ask Jesus in verse 7?
4. What warnings does Jesus give in verses 8–9?
5. What kinds of events does Jesus mention will take place before the end (vv. 8–9)?

Interpretation

(What does the text mean?)

6. Why might the disciples have been shocked by Jesus' prediction of the temple's destruction?
7. What does Jesus mean by saying, "*The end will not be at once*" (v. 9)?
8. Why does Jesus warn his disciples about trying to interpret the times using false teachers, false signs, wars and disasters?
9. What does this passage teach us about the danger of misplaced trust in outward appearances (like the temple's beauty)?
10. How does this text shape our understanding of the difference between "signs of the end" and the actual end itself?

Correlation

(How does this connect with the rest of the Bible?)

11. How does Jesus' prediction in verse 6 connect with the Old Testament warnings about the temple (e.g., Jeremiah 7:1–15; Micah 3:12)?

12. Compare Jesus' warning about false messiahs (v. 8) with Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3. What similarities do you see?
13. How do wars, rumors of wars, and disasters as "not the end" (v. 9) echo Matthew 24:6–8?
14. Where else in Scripture do we see the call to remain watchful but not fearful in the face of world events (e.g., Psalm 46; John 14:27)?
15. How does this passage prepare us to read the later parts of Luke 21 where Jesus speaks more fully about his return?

Application
(How should we live in light of this text?)

16. What kinds of "temples" (things we admire for their beauty, stability, or seeming permanence) are we tempted to trust in today?
17. How can we discern false teachers or false "saviors" in our world, as Jesus warned?
18. How should Christians respond when they hear news of wars, conflicts, or disasters?
19. What practical steps can you take to anchor your faith in Christ rather than in circumstances, buildings, human leaders or things you love?
20. How does this passage encourage you to live faithfully and without fear, even in uncertain times?
21. What steps do you need to take to adopt a fearless life?



Mon, Sept. 22nd. Read Luke 21:5. People around Jesus were captivated by the temple's beauty. But Jesus saw beyond the glitter to its fall. We too can become impressed by religion or others or other things, to the neglect of Jesus. The question is not how impressive something looks, but what place it has in our lives. Take an inventory today.

Are you an idol worshipper? If so, confess that to God and pay daily attention that nothing misdirects your attention from Jesus.

Tues, Sept. 23rd. Read Luke 21:6. Jesus' words must have sounded shocking. The temple was the center of Jewish life, yet it, like everything else in life, would fall and fail its worshippers. Jesus would insure it...stone for stone. This is a sobering reminder that only God is worthy of our attention and affection, of our worship. Our true security is found not in politics or people, but in Christ alone. Be careful about what you worship. God tends to remove our idols. Confess, repent, and redirect your heart's love today.

Wed, Sept 24th. Read Luke 21:7. Remember that eschatology is ethical. Jesus tells us about the future to change the way we live now. The disciples wanted a timeline, but Jesus gave them a warning instead. Knowing "when" is less important than living ready. We want certainty about the future, but Jesus calls us to faithfulness in the present. His words teach us to live each day in a posture of trust, ready for whatever comes. Is there anything you need to change if Jesus comes today. Do it! And then live every day like Jesus could come today...because he could.

Thurs, Sept 25th. Read Luke 21:8. History has seen many false teachers and self-proclaimed saviors, but only Jesus is our Savior, not a political party or person. Jesus reminds us that discernment is vital. We must know His voice through his words, the Bible. Only the true Christ saves. Are you looking for salvation in anyone/thing other than Jesus? Don't let good things or sincere people become your god. Think about that today as you go about your life. Live discerningly.

Fri, Sept. 26th. Read Luke 21:9. Jesus did not promise a peaceful world before His return. Wars, conflicts, and disasters have always existed since Eden's fall, but His disciples – and we – should not be terrified. These events are reminders of a broken creation. But sin does not win in the end. Followers of Christ can rest in the assurance that God directs our lives and history toward His good purposes. But where you place your hope determines your heart wellness. Is your heart unwell? Is that a symptom of misplaced hope?



shutterstock.com • 2504972913



