

Don't Fear the **FUTURE**

(What Jesus said about the End Times)

"So when all these things begin to happen, stand and look up, for your salvation is near!" Luke 21:28 NLT



People are fearful today. They are fearful about their health, job, family, safety, the future, etc. However, the follower of Christ does not need to live in fear. Jesus said, *"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* John 16:33 NLT. Also, Paul wrote, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."* 2 Timothy 1:7 NLT.

Three Questions

The disciples asked Jesus three questions (Luke 21:7; Also Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:4). The answer that Jesus gave is the longest answer given to any question asked in the New Testament. *"...Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?"* (Matthew 24:3), *"Teacher, they asked, 'when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to take place?'"* (Luke 21:7).

- (1) When would the temple be destroyed?
- (2) What would be the sign of his coming? (Luke 21:7)
- (3) What would be the sign of the end of the world?

The disciples were thinking that these events would all take place at the same time. However, they will happen at different periods. The temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans. The last two events are yet future.

The Central Lesson:

We don't need to fear the future because God is in control and will care for His people.

Why We Don't Need to Fear the Future

Why the study of prophecy is an encouragement in the present world situation.

- 1. The Bible FORETELLS of numerous events that must yet come to fulfillment.** The world is not presently coming to an end. God has given us a glimpse of the direction human history will take. We don't know every detail about the future but God has revealed some events in the future.
- 2. The expression "end times" does not mean an END to human existence.** Rather, it refers to the end of the present world order. It refers to the beginning of a new phase of human existence.
- 3. The fulfillment of ancient prophecy is a REASSURANCE of the trustworthiness of the fulfillment of future prophecy.** There are hundreds of prophecies that have been fulfilled in the past. These dealt with the coming of Jesus the Messiah, the nation of Israel, and many of the nations of the world. Furthermore, hundreds of prophecies that are yet future to our time. Most of these are given in the book of

Revelation, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, portions of Daniel, Zechariah, and sprinkled references in both the New and Old Testament.

General Observations about Luke 21 & Matthew 24-25

1. Israel was the focus of His answer, not the CHURCH.
The Church was a *mystery* when Jesus said these things (Ephesians 5:32; 3:6). The Church did not exist until the Jewish holiday of Pentecost ten days after His ascension into heaven (Acts 1-2). The nation of Israel is His focus as seen by Matthew's references to (1) the Temple *"the holy place"* (v.15), (2) Daniel's prophecy about *"the abomination that causes desolation"* (v.15) (3) Judea (v. 16), (4) the Sabbath (v.20). The term *"the elect"* - NIV or *"chosen ones"* - NLT (v.22, 24, 31) is not a reference to the Church but people who turn to Christ during the Tribulation period.

2. Jesus was focusing on His RETURN at the end of the Tribulation period to set up His Millennial Kingdom, not the RAPTURE of the church before the Tribulation.

Jesus does not refer to the Church, the Church Age, nor the rapture in The Olivet Discourse. His focus is the Tribulation period (21:8-26) and the Second Coming of Christ to the earth (cf. 21:27-28). **However, if the signs for the Second Coming are starting to appear today, the Rapture has to be even closer.**

3. The signs will appear mainly during the TRIBULATION period although they may begin appearing in the PRESENT age.

Many of the signs *begin* appearing in the present church age and will continue in greater frequency and intensity until their final fulfillment in the Tribulation.

Specific Signs from the Olivet Discourse

Jesus predicted the following signs as recorded in Matthew 24 and Luke 21:

1. Deception (**Luke 21:8**; Mt. 24:4-5, 11).
2. Wars & rumors of wars (**Luke 21:9-10**; Mt. 24:6-7).
3. Earthquakes in various [unusual] places (**Luke 21:11**; Mt. 24:7).
4. Famines (**Luke 21:11**; Mt. 24:7).
5. Pestilences [disease] (**Luke 21:11**).
6. Fearful events & great signs from heaven (**Luke 21:11**).
7. Persecution of Christ-followers (**Luke 21:12-15**; Mt. 24:9).
8. Defection from following Christ (Mt. 24:10).
9. Betrayal & deep hate (**Luke 21:16-17**; Mt. 24:0; Mk 13:12).
10. Increase of wickedness (Mt. 24:12).
11. Cold hearts (Mt. 24:2).
12. Worldwide preaching of the gospel (Mt. 24:14).
13. The Antichrist declares himself god in the temple (Mt. 24:15).
14. Jerusalem attacked by enemy armies (**Luke 21:20-24**; Zechariah 14).
15. Great distress over the earth (**Luke 21:25-26**; Mt. 24:21-22).

Conclusion - We don't need to fear the future because God is in control and will care for His people.

- Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ.
► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.