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Luke 21 - What You Need to Know About the End Times



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #144 ~

One of my favorite prophecy passages is Luke 21:5-36. Similar to Matthew 24, it gives a great deal of information about the end-times and Christ's coming. But there's one thing you need to know before you can understand this key prophetic portion of Scripture, and that's the sequence, the order of end-time events. What you need to realize is that the last phrase of Luke 21:11 and the first phrase of Luke 21:25 are both talking about the same thing, these signs in the heavens. Knowing that, plus seeing that Luke 21:12 starts with *"But before all these things..."* means that verses 12-24 is a parenthetical, telling us related and important information that takes place before these end-of-the-age signs. With that in mind, here's a summary of Luke 21:5-36.

Luke 21:5-8. The disciples are happily talking to Jesus about the magnificent Jewish temple, but surprisingly, He informs them that it will

be destroyed. Surely in shock, the disciples want to know when it's going to happen. Jesus then gives a long and thorough answer to their question, instructing them about the future, that which is especially relevant and useful to us Christians who are now living in the end-times.

Luke 21:9-11. First and foremost, the true Christ warns them about false Christs. Then He mentions the birth pains – the wars, plagues, famines and great earthquakes, events which take place over a long period of time (Matthew 24:4-8, Revelation 6:1-8). Next He tells them about these aforementioned signs in the heavens, these heart-stopping cosmic disturbances signaling the end of the age and the return of Christ (Matthew 24:29-31, Revelation 6:12-14). That leads to this important parenthetical, two distinct passages between verse 11 and verse 25. And what do they say?

Luke 21:12-19. This parenthetical tells us what begins before all the things spoken of in verses 9-11. Right away we realize this passage is about Christians being persecuted. From history, we know this persecution started at the beginning of the church age, has continued since that time, and will keep going until the end of this age. This persecution, fueled by extreme hate, is religious and political in nature but, sadly, is also brought on by a person's own family members. This end-times' great suffering will be extremely difficult for Christians, but Jesus says it *"will lead to an opportunity for your testimony."* And as He tells us in Matthew 24:14, this *"gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."*

Luke 21:20-24. This parenthetical continues by summing up Jewish history during this church age. It starts with Jesus' prediction about God's punishing wrath upon the Jews, which historians tell us took place around 70 AD. Jesus then predicts that the Jews would be *"led captive into all the nations,"* and this happened, for Jews were scattered all over the world. But about 140 years ago they miraculously began returning to their homeland, to Israel. From 1880 to the present, the Jewish

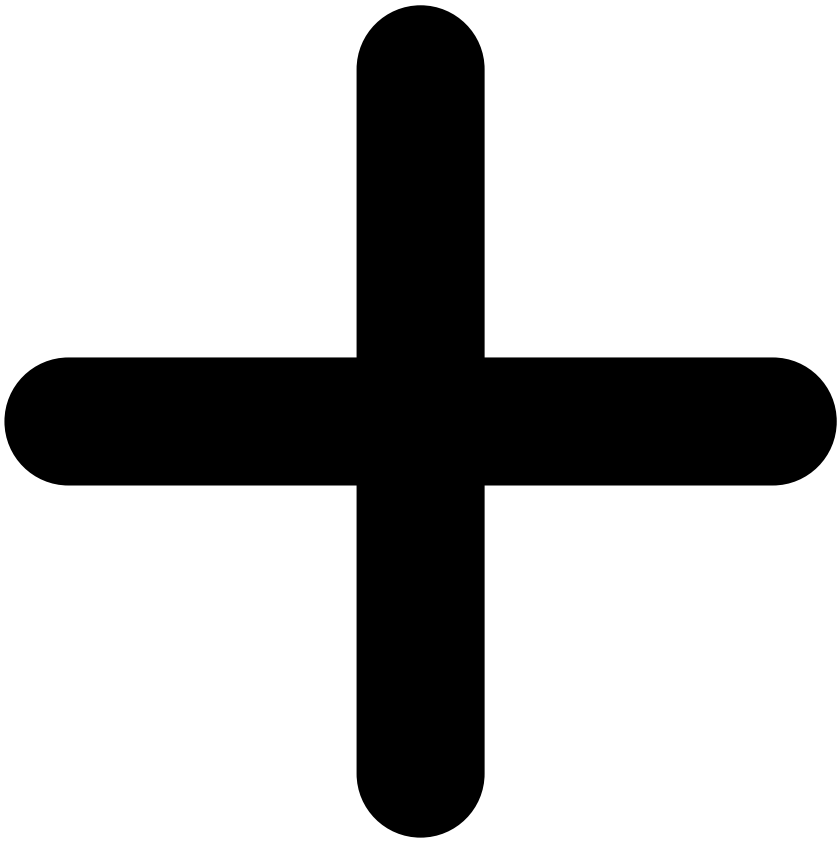
population has grown from about 10,000 to 6.6 million people, thus fulfilling God's promise to regather the Jews. That the Jews are now back in their land is the number one reason we can say we are living in the end-times. This is relevant for the church, shown by the fact that these passages about Christians (Luke 21:12-19) and Jews (Luke 21:20-24) sit side by side, which means that God's work with the Jews is in conjunction with His work with the Christians. This great work of God is leading us to the end of this age when Christ will return to rapture the Christians, and then set up His earthly kingdom for the Jews.

Luke 21:25-28. The first phrase in this passage speaks about these signs in the heavens, picking up from where we left off in verse 11. But notice, there's a great earthquake, for we read about *"the roaring of the sea."* What a terrifying event for unbelievers – they are scared to death, *"fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the earth"* (Revelation 6:16-17). But what a glorious time for Christians, for they see their Savior coming to rescue them from the earth, bring them to Himself, and then to heaven. This rapture event results in their redemption, a word that means deliverance, for believers will be completely delivered from sin, Satan and an evil world.

Luke 21:29-33. Jesus tells the disciples a parable, but clearly it's for Christians living in the end-times, that whoever sees all the things He had just talked about will be part of that generation who will witness Christ's return. How exciting for Christians living on earth at that time, for they will suddenly be snatched off the earth to be with Jesus! But there's something else, for just as the redemption is near (verse 28), so too the kingdom of God is near (verse 31), referring to when Christ returns to set up His kingdom on earth, of special interest to Jews, and also to Christians, for we too will be reigning with Christ for 1000 glorious years. Jesus emphatically proclaims that this passage is true, for He says that His words, which are God's words, will not pass away, which means all that He had just talked about is surely going to happen!

Luke 21:34. Christ concludes with instructions for Christians. We are to guard and watch our hearts, and not be worried, worldly and fleshly in these end-time years. We are to be awake and alert, aware of what's going on in the world around us. Now is the time to have faith, to be praying and serving, and looking for our Lord's soon return, to that time when we will literally *"stand before the Son of Man."* How sweet and satisfying to finally see and be with our Lord and Savior. *"Come, Lord Jesus."*

P.S. Luke 21 and Matthew 24 are my two most favorite chapters on prophecy. I have a blog post on Matthew 24 (Matthew 24 – A Road Map of the End Times), a short but good summary, and a longer, much more detailed article (Matthew 24 – The Most Important Prophecy Chapter in the Bible). I would encourage you to read Matthew 24, and then read what I have written, for I believe it will help you understand what God has in store for the future.





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