

(Through the Bible) Luke 20-21

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith explores the authority of Jesus, the significance of his parables, and the hope of resurrection in his teachings from Luke 20-21.

Duration: 1:23:31

Scripture: Isaiah 5:1-7, Matthew 21:12-13, Matthew 21:23, Matthew 21:33-41, Matthew 21:45-46, Luke 19:47, Luke 20:45-47

Topics: "Jesus Teachings", "Gods Patience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses a parable about a vineyard and its significance in relation to the nation of Israel. The parable tells the story of a vineyard owner who sends servants to collect fruit from the vineyard, but they are mistreated and sent away empty-handed. Finally, the owner sends his beloved son, hoping that he will be respected, but instead, the vineyard workers reject and harm him. The preacher connects this parable to the rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees and emphasizes the importance of patience in the things of God. The sermon also references passages from the book of Isaiah and the book of Acts to further illustrate the message.

Transcript

We are in the final week of the life of Jesus. He is now in Jerusalem. This is the week in which pilgrims are coming from all over the world to celebrate the Feast of the Passover.

He has made his triumphant entry, that is on Sunday. He was officially rejected. He did cleanse the temple, driving out the money changers, taking authority in his father's house.

And he taught daily in the temple. We read in verse 47 of chapter 19. So it came to pass that on one of those days, the days that he was teaching in the temple from Sunday through Wednesday or Thursday, one of those days as he was teaching in the temple and preaching the gospel, proclaiming to man God's good news, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders.

So this august body of religious authority, the chief priests who were mainly Sadducees, the scribes and the elders, and they spake unto him saying, tell us by what authority do you do these things? And who is he that gave you this authority? They're probably still a little upset over the fact that he cleansed the temple. He drove out the money changers. He came in and took over and said, this is my father's house, and he took over.

And they were upset because the high priest was in league with the money changers. They made a rake off of the money changers and those that sold the doves and the oxen and all there in the temple grounds. And so what authority? Now they were expecting, or at least hoping, you see, they're looking now for charges whereby they might put him to death.

And they were hoping that at this point he would say, I am the Messiah. God is my father. He gave me the authority.

He referred to the temple as my father's house. And so they were hoping that he would make the claim of messiahship in order that they might accuse him of blasphemy and immediately try him. But his hour was not yet come.

So he did not answer them directly, but he answered them indirectly saying, I will ask you one thing and you answer me. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? And they reasoned with themselves saying, if we shall say from heaven, he will say, why did you not believe him? If we say of men, all of the people will stone us for they're persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered that they could not tell whence it was.

And Jesus said unto them, neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. Now, John had testified concerning Jesus Christ that this is he that was. Before me or was after me, but who was preferred before me, the latchet of who shoes I'm unworthy to unloose.

John had declared concerning Jesus Christ, behold, the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. So John, who the people had had accepted as from God, they recognize that John's authority was from the Lord. And John being recognized by the people as a prophet of God had declared that Jesus was indeed the lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

So had they said, well, John was of the Lord, then Jesus would say, all right, that's the authority that I have, the same authority of John. And basically he was saying this. I came with the same authority that John came.

Now, it is interesting to me how that so often there is that challenge today concerning authority for men have set up their systems by which they recognize authority. If you go to our college and graduate and then attend our seminary, then we will recognize your authority. To teach the word of God or to proclaim God's truth and the authority that man bestows upon man.

I would like to offer my opinion that men have ordained many men to the ministry who have never been ordained by God. They've been ordained to the ministry purely on the basis that they have fulfilled a certain requirement of studies, but there is absolutely no anointing of God upon their lives or upon their ministries. And they'd be better off selling shoes or I should say, maybe repairing shoes.

And that's a better way that they could save souls. We have made it a policy here at Calvary Chapel in the ordination board to observe a person's ministry and to see if their ministry bears witness that God's anointing is upon their life. For we are convinced that only God ordains a man for the work of the Lord.

And the best we can do is ratify what God has done. So basically we haven't ordained anybody to the ministry, nor do we ordain anybody to the ministry, but we like to recognize those that God has ordained and ratify that work of God in their lives. So recognizing that God has ordained this man, God's anointing is upon his life.

God is using him. We give to them that recognition that they need by the state. But it is interesting also how that so many of these young men who have gone out with the obvious work of God in and through their lives are challenged.

Who gave you the authority? Greg Laurie has been challenged so many times. Raul Reese has been challenged so many times. Where did you go to seminary, you know? Who gave you the authority? It's sort of disconcerting and upsetting to these men with their doctrines and theology that some young kid can come into town and start a Bible study that grows into a church of over 5,000 members when with all of their degrees and learning and knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew and so forth, they have a hard time through pushing and programming and every guise and device that you can think maintaining, you know, four or five hundred people.

It's just not fair. After all, I've been trained the authority. Now, the Mormons quite often ask this question because they believe that God has restored the authority to the church through Joseph Smith and that the 12 apostles of the Mormon church are the only ones who can actually bestow authority upon a person to minister the gospel.

And so they do not recognize the authority of anyone who has not been sanctioned by the 12 apostles of the Mormon church for everybody knows that they are the only true church. And so they quite often challenge by what authority. So Jesus went through the same thing.

Then he began to speak to them a parable, a certain man planted a vineyard and he let it out to husbandmen and he went into a far country for a long time. Note, Jesus is now giving a parable that relates to his going away, letting out. It's a twofold, actually, interpretation because it also is a parable against these Pharisees at the season.

He sent a servant to the husbandmen that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard. But the husbandmen beat him and sent him away empty. And again, he sent another servant and they beat him also and then treated him shamefully.

And they sent him away empty. And again, he sent a third and they wounded him also and cast him out. Then said the Lord of the vineyard, what shall I do? I will send my beloved son.

It may be that they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, this is the heir. Come, let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.

So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. And what, therefore, shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

And he beheld them and said, what is this then that is written? The stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Now, in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, the Lord speaks there a parable through Isaiah of a vineyard and the vineyard was the nation of Israel.

How that this man planted a vineyard, he put the choicest vines in it. He built a hedge around it and he put a wine press in the middle and when the time came to gather fruit from the vineyard, there was nothing but wild grapes on the vine. And so he let the vineyard go.

And the prophet was speaking about how that God had set apart the nation Israel that it might bring forth fruit unto God. But their failure to bring forth that fruit that God was desiring from them would bring actually a rejection by God or just being let go by God and their demise. So when Jesus began to speak the parable of the vineyard, aware of the prophecy of Isaiah, their minds flip back and they realize that he's talking now about the nation of Israel, God's vineyard.

The servants that were sent to the vineyard were the prophets who were rejected by the people. Some of them were stoned. Others of them were killed.

Isaiah was actually sought into. And so these are the prophets that God sent to the nation. Finally, God sent his only begotten son.

Surely they will reverence him. But the husband, when they saw him, said, this is the heir. Let's kill him that the inheritance may be ours.

And so Jesus here is predicting his death at their hands. Now, the result of their rejection of the son, the commandment of the Lord, destroy the husband man. The nation of Israel was destroyed by Titus.

Josephus said that he killed 1,100,000 Jews and they carried 97,000 away as slaves to Rome. When they heard this, they said, God forbid, for they recognize that Jesus was speaking about them. And so then he asked them, what does this parable mean? That which is written, the stone which the builders have set up, not the same has become the chief cornerstone.

Psalms 118. Now, Peter, in the fourth chapter of Acts, when he was standing before the elders and the scribes and the high priest, this same group that was challenging Jesus here, when Peter stood before them in Acts, the fourth chapter, they were asking Peter, by what authority did you work this miracle on this lame man? By what name or by what power have you done this? So they were giving him much the same business as they gave to Jesus. We want to know by what power did you do this? By what name? And Peter said, Amen of Israel.

If we have been examined this day because of the good deed that has been done to this lame man, you judge for yourselves on that. But be it known unto you that it is by the name of Jesus Christ that this man stands here before you whole. And this is the stone which was set up, not by you builders, but he has become the chief cornerstone and neither is there salvation in any other.

For there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved. So Peter was here when Jesus was challenged concerning authority. He remembered the answer of Jesus to these men.

He remembered this parable that Jesus ended by saying unto them, what does this mean? The stone that was set up, not by the builders, the same has become the chief cornerstone. And so Peter brings it right back to them very forcibly, declaring of Jesus, this is the stone which was set up, not by you builders, but the same has become the chief cornerstone. Now Jesus declaring concerning that stone said, whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken.

But upon whomsoever that stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder. You have one of two relationships to Jesus Christ. Either that of submitting to him, falling upon the stone, or resisting him and ultimately being ground to powder.

Woe unto him who strives with his maker. Many people are so foolish as to fight against Jesus Christ. Fall upon the stone, fall upon Jesus Christ.

You'll find you'll be broken. Better that you do that than in judgment have him fall upon you and be ground to powder. Now the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him, but they feared the people for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

They got the message. They knew that he was referring to them and so they were actually wanting desperately to arrest him at this point. And yet because of the popular acclaim of the people, they did not do it.

And so they watched him and they sent forth spies which should feign themselves to be just men. That they might take hold of his words in order that they might deliver him to the powers and authorities of the governor. They're now going to try and trap him so that they can accuse him of sedition or of rebellion against Rome and turn him over to the governor.

And so they asked him saying, Master, we know that you say and teach the truth and you do not accept the person of any, but you teach the way of God truly. In other words, you're no respecter of man's persons. You are a straight shooter.

We know this. We know that you don't bow to man. That you tell the truth.

You speak the truth. Therefore, is it lawful for us to give taxes to Caesar or not? If Jesus says no, it is not lawful for you to give taxes to Caesar. Immediately, they'll run to the Antonio fortress, call for the Roman centurion, and have him come down and arrest Jesus for advocating a tax rebellion against Caesar.

If Jesus says, yes, it is lawful for you to pay taxes to Caesar, these zealots who would not recognize the power of the Roman government, who hated these taxes that were levied by Rome. And there was a certain tax that was levied upon every man just for the privilege of living. This is the tax they were referring to.

It wasn't much of a tax, but it was just to show the Roman authority. And so they felt that they had Jesus cleverly trapped. Either way, he's wrong.

And so he said, show me a coin, show me a penny. And he said, whose image, superscription does it have on it? And they answered and said, Caesar's. And he said unto them, render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

And unto God, the things that are God's. It's got Caesar's image on it, give it to Caesar. But he added, you should be rendering unto God the things that are God's.

And they could not take hold of his words before the people, and they marveled at his answer and they held their peace. And then there came certain to him who were Sadducees, who deny that there is any resurrection. And they asked him saying, Master Moses, now the Sadducees were materialist.

They accepted as authority, as authoritative, only the five books of Moses. They rejected the prophets. They would not accept them as a part of the scriptures.

Only the five books of Moses did they consider to be divinely inspired. And so if you would get into an argument with them, and you would quote from the Psalms or quote from the prophets, they would reject

it. As not being authoritative, only the five books of Moses.

So they said, Moses wrote unto us, if any man's brother die having a wife and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife and raise up a seed unto his brother. Now there were therefore seven brothers. And the first took a wife and he died without children.

And the second took her to a wife and he died childless. And the third, and in like manner, the seven also. And they left no children and they all died.

Last of all, the poor woman died too. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? For all seven had her as their wife. Now, the endeavor was to make the resurrection seem so ridiculous that people say, well, that's that's stupid.

That's foolish, you know. And thoroughly discount the idea of the resurrection. There have been those who have done the same thing today, only a little different way.

They hypothesize that back in the days of the Wild West, when a man was shot in a gun battle and they went out and just dug a shallow grave and buried his body, that as his body decomposed, we know the body is made up of chemicals and elements. And as the body decomposed, these chemicals just actually went into the soil, became a part of the soil. And the prairie grass, its little roots went down into the soil and the chemicals of this decomposed body were picked up in the roots of the prairie grass.

And, of course, came up through the root system and into the grass itself, nourishing the grass. And the cows came and ate the prairie grass that has the chemicals of the decomposed body of this man who was shot in the gun battle. And the cows gave their milk that contained a part of the chemicals from the decomposed body.

And I drank that milk. And thus, those chemicals have become a part of my body now. So that in the resurrection, in what body are these chemicals going to go? Because they've been a part of many bodies.

And they've tried to make the idea of the resurrection seem ridiculous by these hypotheses that they have created. Now, Jesus said, you err because you do not know the resurrection or the power of God. In the resurrection, there will be no marrying or giving in marriage.

But we will be as the angels who neither marry nor are given in marriage. As I understand God's purpose for marriage, it is to establish a beautiful, healthy environment for children to be raised, to be brought into the world. The basic plan for marriage that we might reproduce, that we might be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.

Now, in heaven, the angels do not reproduce. Thus, no need for marriage. We will not be reproducing.

Thus, no need for marriage. We will be as the angels are. A lot of questions.

Will we know each other then in heaven? Of course we will. We're not going to be more stupid there than we are here. The Bible says we will know even as we are known.

Well, what kind of relationships will we have? Deeper, richer than any we could ever experience on the earth. Now, just how in all of these relationships God has not really gone into details with us. He just told us that we'll be as the angels.

Now, there are some poor people that feel, well, if I can't be married, I don't want to go there. Well, the alternative is not so pleasant. There's nothing that says you're going to be married there either.

You say, but what about that milk I'm drinking? I'm not going to have this body in heaven. We know that when the earthly tent, this body is dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. I'm going to get a new body.

A building of God, not made with hands. So, whatever happens to this body, I could care less. Some say, well, what about cremation? They can do what they want.

We know that when this earthly tent is dissolved, and if they do it by cremation, it'll be dissolved in 37 minutes. If they let the natural processes go, it'll take a little longer. But I will have moved out and have moved in to my new house.

The building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Jesus said, in my father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you, I'm going to prepare a place for you.

You say, oh, but what about the resurrection of our bodies? Well, what about them? Paul the Apostle said, some will say, how are the dead raised and what kind of a body will they have? And he said, don't you realize that God teaches resurrection in nature? For when you plant a seed into the ground, the seed does not come forth into new life until it first of all dies. And then the body, and listen carefully, the body that comes out of the ground is not the body that you planted. I feel sorry for you who are so in love with your body that you want to carry it on into the new kingdom.

For the body that comes out of the ground is not the body that you planted because all you planted was a bare grain and God gives it a body that pleases him. And if it pleases God, you can be sure it's going to please me. So is the resurrection from the dead, Paul asserts.

For we are planted in corruption. We will be raised in incorruption. We are planted in weakness.

We'll be raised in power. We are sown in dishonor. We'll be raised in glory.

We are planted as a natural body, but we'll be raised as a spiritual body where there's a natural body. And there is a spiritual body in the glory of the terrestrial differs from the glory of the celestial. And even as we have borne the image of the earth and have been earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavens.

So the body that comes out is not the body that was planted. All we planted was a bare grain. God gives it a body that pleases him.

So I'm really quite interested in that new model and all of the gadgets, the capacities of that new body. Probably just fantastic as this corruption puts on incorruption and this mortal puts on immortality where you see. God created this body out of the earth for the earth of the earth, earthy.

Designed it for the environmental conditions of the earth. The earth is made up of 79 parts, the atmosphere on the earth, the 79 parts of nitrogen, 20 parts of oxygen and one part of neon and other gases. Now, when God made my body, he designed it so that it needed this 79 20.

Ratio in the atmosphere operates well under it. If he put more oxygen in my heart would beat faster and I would die sooner. More nitrogen, I would have the opposite effect, but I'd still die sooner.

My heart would go slower. If he put equal parts of nitrogen and oxygen in the atmosphere, we'd all go around like a bunch of laughing maniacs, because that's nitric oxide, which is laughing gas in the dentist chair. So we'd all go around with uncontrollable laughter.

So he designed the body for the conditions of the environment of the earth. But to come into the heavenly scene, I need a body that's designed for that environment. So God has a new body prepared for me.

And one day my spirit and soul are going to move out of this body into the new body that God has. And with Paul, I'll say, oh, death, where is your sting? Oh, grave, where is your victory? We have been caused to triumph over them through Jesus Christ. Thanks be unto God who gives us that continual victory through Jesus our Lord.

So they did not understand. And so Jesus said, the children of this world marry. That is in this age, in this time, they marry and are given in marriage.

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age or that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die anymore. My new body is indestructible, eternal in the heavens.

The building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So you better like your new one because that's where you're going to be. For they are equal unto the angels.

And are the children of God being the children of the resurrection. Oh, wait a minute. You said something, Jesus.

These guys don't believe in the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush. You see, these men only accepting the first five books of the Old Testament.

Held the position that there was no resurrection. And though there were many arguments prior to the time of Christ, as others were seeking to prove the resurrection to them, because they only accepted Moses as authoritative, no one had ever offered them from the writings of Moses any proof of the resurrection. So Jesus goes right back to Moses.

Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush. When he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Jacob at the time that Moses stood before the bush had been dead for 400 years.

Isaac and Abraham even longer. And yet God, when he spoke to Moses out of the bush, said, I am the Lord. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

And Jesus adds, he is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Declaring that 400 years after their recorded deaths, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still alive in another dimension, another sphere, but still alive because God is the God of the living, not the God of the dead. And the scribes, when they heard that, they said, hey, that's all right.

They had never been able to argue their case with the Sadducees. But when they heard that argument, they were really pleased with that. That, hey, that's all right.

You nailed them, you know, you got them. And so they answered Jesus saying, master, you have said, well, that's good. And after that, they dared not to ask him any more questions.

And so he said unto them, how say they that Christ is David's son? Now, one of the titles for the Messiah was son of David. Last week, you remember when we were in Jericho and Jesus was entering the city, there was the blind man who cried out, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. Son of David was a messianic title because they were looking for some descendant of David to arise in power and in authority to establish the kingdom and to overthrow the Roman rule.

Thou son of David, a common title of the Messiah. So he said unto them, how is it that you say that the Messiah and the word Christ is the Greek for the Hebrew Messiah? So how is it that you say the Messiah is David's son? And David himself said in the book of the Psalms, that is in Psalms 110, The Lord, that is Yahweh, said unto my Lord, my Adonai, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore called him Lord.

How then could he be his son? You are dealing with a culture that is a very strong patriarchal culture. The father rules. No matter how old he is, as long as he's living, he rules over the household.

You can be married and have your own grandkids. But if your dad's still alive, he rules. No son would ever call his, or no father would ever call his son Lord.

That was a title for the father, for the patriarch of the family. He ruled. So no father would ever say to his son, Lord, using that title.

So Jesus said, look, if he's the son of David, how is it that David called him Lord? If he's his son. And of course, they had no answer. And then in the audience of all the people, he said to his disciples, you know, this is, he turns to his disciples now, all the people listening in.

He said, beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes and love greetings in the markets and the highest seats in the synagogues and the chief rooms in the feast, which devour widows' houses and for a show make long prayers. The same shall receive greater damnation. Beware of those who seek to make a public show for a pretense, make long prayers, devour widows' houses, send out computerized letters filled with deceit and fraud to the little women and so on social security, ask him to go down to the bank and borrow some money to send to them to help them out of this emergency.

Who love the honor and the greetings and the palavering of man. Pray for them because Jesus said they will receive the greater damnation. And he looked up and he saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites, a mite was one sixteenth of a penny. In other words, it took 16 mites to make a penny. Two mites would be an eighth of a penny.

Now, here are these rich people putting in their great gifts. And this certain poor little widow goes up and they're in the temple there, the offering things were sort of like a horn and they would drop them in. Poor little widow casting in her two mites and he said of a truth I say unto you that this poor widow has cast in more than all of them.

For all of these have of their abundance cast into the offerings of God, but she of her penury hath cast in all of the living that she had. So, an interesting thing in God's economy is not the amount that you give, but what it costs you to give. So, many who are giving less in God's economy are giving more.

The amount is immaterial. What's the sacrifice? What's it costing you to give? When David was wanting to buy the threshing floor of Arunah because the angel of the Lord had stopped the plague, it stopped there at the threshing floor of Arunah and David wanted to buy it and to offer a sacrifice unto God. Arunah says, take it, man, it's yours.

And David said, no, I will not give to God that which cost me nothing. And David insisted on buying it. He wouldn't take it as a gift because he wanted to give it to God.

And he said, I won't offer to God that which cost me nothing. What does it cost you to give? That's what God measures the gift by. And as some of them speak of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts.

In the Wars of the Jews by Josephus, book number five and chapter five, he gives an interesting description of the temple in Jerusalem. Of these great white columns of solid marble, each column, a single stone of solid white marble and how along the fascia. All of these gold shields so that if you would look at the temple, the reflection of the gold was so tremendous that it was like looking at the sun itself.

And you couldn't you couldn't just look at the temple because of these gold plates when the sun was reflecting off of it. It would be hard in your eyes like looking in a mirror. And he describes the beauty and the glory of this temple that was built by Herod.

Describing some of the stones as weighing as much as 180 tons. And so some of them were speaking to Jesus of the temple, how it was adorned rather with these goodly stones, these beautiful marble towers and the gifts, the gold and the silver and the brass gates and all that were around it. And he said, as for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.

Today, when you go to Jerusalem, as you go up the walk next to the western wall that leads on to the Temple Mount area, they have excavated the area to the right side of this walk. They have excavated down to the pavement that was the Roman street that went through the bottom of the Turopan Valley. And as they have excavated down to this Roman street, street level at the time of Christ, down there on the pavement, which was made of great huge stones, there are these huge stones that have been pushed over the wall and that cracked the pavement down below.

And you see them as they are just lying there in disarray as they fell and were pushed over the wall and crashed into the valley several hundred feet below, breaking the pavement down below. I've climbed down in to that area and I've touched these big stones and I've marveled at them because as I looked at them, I realized I was seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus Christ. Not one stone was left standing upon another.

They filled the Turopan Valley with stones that they pushed over from the temple. Watching them crash below. When we were up in the Grand Canyon, there was one area that I had a bunch of kids and they were starting to push stones over this canyon cliff because there was about a 3,000 foot drop before they hit.

And it was terrifying to see the momentum that these stones would develop before they hit the bottom and the crash and of course coming echoing up the canyon. But here were the Roman soldiers when they destroyed the temple pushing the stones over and that whole Turopan Valley was filled with the debris

and the stones that they pushed over the wall at the time of the destruction of the temple. But it fulfilled literally the prophecy of Jesus as he said, you look at these stones, but there shall not be one left standing upon another that will not be thrown down.

Thus, as you go up on the Temple Mount, there is no evidence anywhere of where the Temple of Solomon stood. The Temple Mount that he built is there. But there is no evidence at all of the place of the temple because not one stone was left standing on another.

And so they asked him saying, Master, when shall these things be? What things? When the temple is destroyed and the stones are thrown down. And what sign will there be when these things, that is the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, what will be the sign when these things come to pass? And so he said unto them, Take heed that you be not deceived. For many shall come in my name saying, I am.

And that the time is drawing near, but go ye not therefore after them. But when you shall hear of wars and commotions, don't be terrified. For these things must first come to pass and the end is not yet.

Then he said unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in different places and famines and pestilences and fearful signs and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before now these he's going on to the times of the end with these signs of the great earthquakes in different places, the famines, the pestilences, the fearful signs in heaven and the worldwide state of wars.

But before all of these. They shall lay their hands on you coming back to the destruction of the temple. And they will persecute you, delivering you up into the synagogues and into the prisons.

And you'll be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Jesus said, look, you're going to get arrested.

You're going to be hauled before the kings and all for my name's sake. But that's all right. It's going to give you a chance to witness.

And I find it fascinating. That every time Paul was brought before a judge or before the king. He took the opportunity to give a witness for Jesus Christ.

Oh, King Agrippa, I counted a privilege to be able to share with you what's happened to me, because I know that you've studied the law of the Jews and you understand these things. And the things that Jesus did weren't in a corner. Now, I myself was like you.

I thought, you know, to be against this man. And I was commissioned to arrest him and so forth. And and he went on and he gave a heavy witness to King Agrippa.

King Agrippa, do you believe? I know you believe. And oh, wait a minute, Paul, wait a minute. You know, your much learning has made you mad.

And Agrippa said, hey, wait a minute. Hold on. You think that you're going to persuade me to be a Christian? But Paul was trying.

Jesus said, hey, they're going to bring you before kings. But don't worry, it's going to give you a chance to witness. And Paul used it every time he got before the king.

Now, Paul was taken before Nero. There is nothing in the biblical account that tells us what Paul said. But as we study secular history, it would seem that Nero wasn't too bad a fellow.

He was actually very anxious to leave his mark upon Rome and to build some monuments in Rome. His castle is a great monument in itself that has been uncovered recently. But Nero wasn't really too awful a fellow until in history, until he met this fellow, Paul the Apostle.

The first time that Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he had his opportunity. You remember when he was before Festus, he appealed to Caesar. And so he was sent to Rome, placed there in prison, where he wrote his Philippian epistle, and he had his chance to go before Nero.

Now, you think that the witness he laid on Agrippa was heavy. You can be sure that Paul thought, man, if I can convert this pagan to Christianity, what that would do. And I'm sure that Paul laid on Nero a witness second to none in the history of the church.

Secular history records this dramatic personality change of Nero right after the time that Paul laid the witness on him. It was at that same period of time in history that Nero went through a drastic personality change and became a beast. He burned Rome because he wanted to rebuild a new glorious Rome for his credit.

And then he blamed the Christians for it. But he became almost a man possessed, insane. I feel that personally, that he became demon possessed after Paul's witness and his rejection of Paul's witness.

I believe that he opened his heart and life to demon possession. And I believe that the things that he did can only be ascribed to a man possessed by an evil spirit. But up until that time of Paul's witness, he wasn't that bad of a fellow historically.

So Jesus said, now, don't worry about it. It's going to give you a chance to witness. And Paul took that chance every time he got it.

And he said, don't make up a little speech in advance in your own heart what you're going to say. Well, now I'm going to say this and that and the other. But he said, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gain, say, nor resist.

Now, don't worry about what you're going to say because I'll give you the words in that time and you can wipe them out. And you will be betrayed both by your parents and your brothers and your kinfolk and your friends. And some of you, they will cause you to be put to death.

Fox's Book of Martyrs relates to us that sad portion of the history of the church. And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not a hair of your head perish.

They may kill your body. But after that, they have no power. And in your patience, possess ye your souls.

What an important bit of instruction. In patience. God, help us.

We're so impatient when it comes to the things of God. In your patience, possess ye your souls. God, give me patience.

And when you will see Jerusalem encircled with armies, which happen within forty years, then know that the desolation is near. Let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains. And let them which are in the

midst of it depart out.

And let them that are in the countries enter in thereto. For these are the days of vengeance. Rome is going to take out her vengeance upon the rebellion.

And all of the things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child and to those that are nursing in those days. For there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword. And they will be led away captive to all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

So, in 70 A.D., when Titus came with the Roman troops and besieged Jerusalem, killed 1,100,000 Jews, carried away the remaining 97,000 as captive, Israel ceased to be a nation. They were carried away captive into all nations. And the prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled.

And Jerusalem from that day have been trodden down by the Gentiles until June of 1967. Now, as I understand prophecy, in June of 1967, the time of the Gentiles came to an end. You say, well, what are we in now? Just a space gap.

I believe that the Lord is going to begin a very special work with the nation of Israel very soon. There is a seven-year period of prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled. Daniel's 70th week.

And that seven-year period of God's Spirit upon the nation of Israel and dealing with them and their restoration must come. That period has not yet begun. But in 1967, for all practical purposes, when Jerusalem became again the territory of the nation of Israel, when they drove out the Jordanian troops and they took the city of Jerusalem.

At that point, according to the words of Jesus, Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Since that time has just been a short period of God's grace, giving others that opportunity to become a part of God's kingdom before he gathers his church together unto himself. So we're just living in a period of God's extended grace to man.

But even as God said in the time of Noah, my spirit will not always strive with man. I believe that God's striving with men has just about come to an end. The time of the Gentiles fulfilled.

And now Jesus goes ahead to give signs of his return. And he said, there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars and upon the earth, distress of nations with perplexity, signs in the heavens. We know that the comet known as Halley's Comet will be returning into our area of the solar system in just a couple of years.

And with the advent of the return of Halley's Comet, there's been a lot of writing in the astronomy magazines and a lot of speculation about asteroids and about comets and the possibilities of a comet or an asteroid striking the earth. And it is interesting that a large part of the physical makeup of comets is cyanide. And it is also interesting that in the book of Revelation, he saw a star fall from heaven and strike the earth.

That is, and all of the fresh waters became bitter. They were called wormwood because they were bitter. It sounds like it could almost be a comet striking the earth and that cyanide poisoning the fresh water systems, turning them bitter.

The cyanide taste, of course, is a bitter taste. You might pick up the astronomy magazine. I think it was December's issue.

It had an interesting article on comets and their makeup. And of course, a lot of, as I say, because Halley's is returning, there's just a lot of things that you can read now in the astronomy journals and all about asteroids and comets. And there is always that likelihood that an asteroid is going to strike the earth.

In fact, our government is making contingency plans. If there seems to be some threat of a large asteroid striking the earth, of sending a rocket out with a nuclear warhead to try and explode it in space so that it won't get to the earth. And these kinds of things are things that are being thought of by the scientists.

Signs in the sun, in the moon, in the stars. On the earth, there'll be distress of nations with perplexity. That means that the distress of nations is problems that nations will be facing.

The word perplexity in the Greek is no way out. Now the government is searching for a way out. We're going to cut taxes and we're going to, you know, balance the budget.

Government has become burdensome. In fact, government has become so expensive, we can't afford it anymore. And that's the problem that we've hit.

There's no way that we can afford government any longer. It's a monster that has just continued to grow, gobbling up everything until it has grown to such an extent that there are not enough people left to support the government workers. I read a statistic someplace and this, I don't know the accuracy of it, but it said some 49% of the people are on the government payroll somewhere or other.

Either through welfare or through jobs that are related to the government. So 51% of the people are productive and the rest are working for the government, supporting the 49. What are we going to do? What's the answer? There is none.

So what shall we do? Well, have heart failure. I thought that this was interesting that it came this week. The sea and the waves roaring.

Any of you live at Sunset Beach? Seal Beach? Men's hearts failing them for fear and for the looking after of those things which are coming upon the earth and the powers of the heaven will be shaken. And then, of course, he's describing events of the Great Tribulation period here. And then, after this Great Tribulation, shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your head for your redemption is drawing close. Now, last October, in one of the shopping malls, towards the end of October, I saw them putting up Christmas decorations. And I said, well, Thanksgiving must be getting close.

Why? Because I know that Thanksgiving comes before Christmas. And if they're putting up Christmas decorations and Thanksgiving hasn't come yet, then Thanksgiving must be getting close. Because it's got to come before Christmas.

Now, Jesus is giving you signs of his return. Signs that will happen before his second coming. But if the rapture of the church is to precede the second coming by seven years, then when we see the signs of the coming of the Lord, we have to say, hey, the rapture must be getting close.

I see the signs of the Lord's return. That makes the rapture that much closer. So, when you see these things beginning to come to pass, then you look up and lift up your head for your redemption is drawing nigh.

And he spake to them a parable. Behold, the fig tree and all of the trees, when they now shoot forth and you see and you know of your own selves that summer is now near at hand. And Jesus is basically saying the same thing.

You see the trees start to blossom out and leaf out. You say, oh, summer must be getting close because I see the trees leaving out. I see the blossoms.

Summer must be getting close. Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all is fulfilled. Now, heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

We have the solid word of Christ. Now, even as Jerusalem was destroyed and not one stone was left standing upon another and the Jews were decimated and the remainder were made slaves throughout the earth and Jerusalem went under the hand of the Gentiles. Just as all of that was fulfilled, you can be sure that Jesus is coming again.

The rest of the prophecies will be fulfilled. God didn't bring it along this far to drop it now. We are moving towards the end.

The whole system is moving towards this climax, return of Jesus Christ in power and glory. But when we see the signs of that return, we know that our redemption is so close. And Jesus affirms.

He said, now look, heaven and earth will pass away, but not my words. So, take heed to yourselves. Now, this is a message for you.

Take heed, be careful, lest at any time your hearts are overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, partying, the cares of this life and that they overtake you unaware. Unaware. There is a party spirit in the world today.

Be careful you're not caught up in it. And that day of the Lord catch you by surprise. Be careful of these things.

Jesus warned you that these things are going to be like a trap for men. Drunkenness, surfeiting, gourmet type of eating, cares of this life. So that that day is coming will come on you unaware.

For as a snare is a trap, shall it come upon all of them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore. Watch ye therefore.

The Lord's command to his church to watch and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, all what things. These things of God's judgment that will be coming to pass upon the earth as there are the signs in the sun and the moon and the stars and the heavens shaken and the earthquakes and the pestilences and famines. Pray that you'll be accounted worthy to escape all of these things.

That shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man. Now in the book of Revelation chapter five, John saw a scroll in the right hand of him who was sitting upon the throne sealed with seven seals and it had writing both within and without. And he heard an angel proclaim with a loud voice who is worthy to

take the scroll and loose the seals.

And when no one was found worthy in heaven or earth, John began to sob compulsively until the elder said, don't sob. John behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to take the scroll and loose the seals. And I turned and I saw him as a lamb that had been slaughtered.

And he took the scroll out of the right hand of him who sat upon the throne. And when he did, the twenty-four elders came forth with their golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. And they offered them before the throne of God.

And they sang a new song saying, worthy is the lamb to take the scroll and to loose the seals. For he was slain, but he is redeemed by his blood out of every nation and tribe and kindred and tongue and people. And he has made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign with him upon the earth.

Listen to the lyric of the song in heaven. Worthy is the lamb. He was slain.

He has redeemed us by his blood. Out of all of the nations, tribes, tongues and people made us under our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign with him upon the earth. These are those who are standing before the son of man.

And the great tribulation does not begin until the beginning of chapter six. And when he loosed the first seal, the angel said unto me, come. And I saw a white horse coming forth upon the earth, conquering and to conquer with his rider and begins the great tribulation period when after the book is opened.

But while the book is there in the right hand of the father, and when Jesus steps forth to take it, that glorious song of the church worthy is the lamb sung by those who are standing before the son of man. Jesus is saying, look, you pray always watch and pray always that you'll be accounted worthy to escape all of these things that are going to be happening upon the earth, that you'll be standing before the son of man. It is my prayer and anticipation that I will be accounted worthy to be standing with the company of God's redeemed saints in heaven, singing of the worthiness of the lamb to take the title deed to the earth and to lay claim to it.

I want to be standing before the son of man. I surely do not want to be down here on this earth when God's wrath is poured out as Jesus has described a portion of it here, but you find the full description in Revelation chapter six through 18. And in the daytime, that's the end of the message.

Now in the daytime, he was teaching in the temple and in night he went out and stayed at the Mount, which is called the Mount of Olives. So he crossed the Kidron Valley and went in up into the Mount of Olives in the evening. And all of the people came early in the morning to him in the temple to hear him.

So there was a popular movement towards Jesus by the common people as the chief priests and the scribes and the elders were plotting his death. And so we move into the final chapters as we get into chapter 22 and Judas's betrayal, the last supper, and we're moving into the final events of Jesus' life, which we will complete next Sunday night as we finish the book of Luke. Shall we pray? Father, as we look around the world in which we live and as we look at your word and as we see these things beginning to come to pass, we see the nation of Israel existing once again.

We see the city of Jerusalem under the control of the nation of Israel, and we see the distress of nations and the perplexities. We see the nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, the increased

earthquakes, these pestilences and famines. Oh Lord, help us that we will be accounted worthy to escape all of these things that are going to come to pass.

Oh God, we want to stand in that heavenly throng around the throne of God, proclaiming the worthiness of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, who died for us, who redeemed us by his blood and has made us unto our God, kings and priests. Thank you, Jesus, for that redemption that we have tonight. Oh Lord, may we be worthy to be in that throng.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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