

Jesus Forecasting the Finish

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen.

With perplexity, the sea, the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation, or foreboding, literally, of those things which are coming on the earth, the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now, when these things begin to happen, look up, lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.

Then he spoke to them a parable. Look at the fig tree, all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.

So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.

Assuredly, I say to you, the generation, this generation, will by no means pass away till all things take place.

[2 : 03] Heaven and earth will pass away. My words will by no means pass away. But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down, overthrown, really, by carousing, drunkenness, cares of this life.

And that day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch, therefore.

Pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.

All right, we'll stop right there. I would read another passage to you. You don't need to turn to it. But the Apostle Peter, really, we might even consider this a parallel passage to the one that I just read. Even though it's not one of the Gospels, it's in one of Peter's letters. In fact, his second letter. And really in the concluding words of his second letter in chapter 3, verse 3, Peter writes these words.

[3 : 16] Knowing this verse, that scoffers or mockers will come in the last days, walking according or living according to their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?

Where is it? For since the fathers fell asleep, that is, since they died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. That is, nothing has changed and nothing ever will change.

But, beloved, Peter goes on to say, Do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day.

The Lord is not slack, he's not slow concerning his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you. Not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come. That's what Peter said. That's what Peter said. That will come. As a thief in the night. Therefore, since all these things will be destroyed.

[4 : 24] All these things that we fight for and worry about and work for and, you know, all these things. Since all these things will be destroyed. What sort of people ought you to be?

In holy conduct and godliness. Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by him at peace without spot and blameless.

And you, therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand. You know the second coming, about the second coming beforehand. Beware, lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To whom be glory both now and forever. Amen.

I said, really, I've read two passages of Scripture that are very similar, really, when you look at the internals of each of these passages. One was spoken, of course, by Jesus, recorded by Luke.

[5 : 31] And the other spoken by the Apostle Peter, written sometime after. So Peter is speaking here in this passage. And Peter then could write with absolute confidence.

Why? Because he was there when Jesus said these words recorded in Luke 21. He was there. And so Peter could say with confidence, the day of the Lord will come, because that's what Jesus said. Jesus said, that day will come. And added to that, Peter could say, since you know this beforehand, beware, lest you also fall. And Peter could say, knowing these things in advance should have a direct effect upon what sort of people you are in all holy conduct and godliness.

Peter could say all of these things. Because Peter was there. When Jesus essentially addressed all of these same issues and in this same order.

All right, so the subject this morning is the second coming. The second coming of Christ. Because you see from verse 5 in this chapter, chapter 21, on through the chapter, everything Jesus has been saying to his disciples has dealt with events which are, were, for them, all future.

[6 : 55] Everything in this chapter was future for his disciples. And yet, they are future events which span, really, a great period of time in history, in world history.

That is, you know, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the persecution at the hands of the kings and rulers and family and friends that Jesus forewarned his disciples about.

These things will be experienced by his disciples and were experienced by his disciples very shortly after Jesus gave these words. But those events Jesus speaks of that are associated with his second coming, which we're going to focus on this morning, those things will occur thousands of years later after Jesus spoke these words.

And we know it will be thousands of years because it's already been 2,000 years. But then, some other events predicted by Jesus in this chapter that we've already looked at, such as persecution, wars, natural disasters, plagues of every kind, famines, fearful signs in the heavens, and so forth. These things will take place many times and periodically at various times during the interim between Jesus' two comings, his first and second coming. And then let me also say this, that Jesus speaks here of the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem by the Gentiles in verse 6, and also again in verses 20 to 24, and we've covered all of that ground.

[8 : 29] But when he says in verse 24, and Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, when he says that, we need to understand that that's going to happen twice.

In fact, it's already happened once. It's going to happen a second time. The first time, it happened in 70 A.D. The second time, it's going to happen during the tribulation period. According to Revelation chapter 11, verse 2, the Bible says, It, that is speaking of Jerusalem and the temple, will be given to the Gentiles, and they will trample on the holy city for 42 months, for three and a half years.

All right, so it's going to happen. It's happened once. It's going to happen a second time. Now, I put all that together to kind of make this point. Jesus is not trying to be strictly chronological in this chapter, in his teachings recorded in this chapter.

And yet, having said that, when we get to verse 24, as we will shortly, when we get there, and really on to the end of the chapter, Jesus is now zeroing in on the second coming, his second coming. And so everything that he says from verse 24, on near to the end of the chapter, will focus on the second coming, but also it will focus upon those who will be alive at the time, the time of these events, the second coming, and the events that will take place just before it.

[9 : 55] That's his audience that he is speaking to primarily, and all that's futurism. Now, at this point, I need to make a couple of points of clarification.

First of all, what we call end times, you hear that quite often, what we call end times really involves an extensive program, the extensive program of God, program that will span a number of years, okay?

And it begins, technically, though we could make an argument from Scripture that we are in the last days. But when we talk about the end times, we're talking about something future, and it begins with the second coming of Christ.

End times begin, technically speaking, officially with the second coming. Now, having said that, there's a second point of clarification. In my understanding of Scripture, the second coming is more a series of events rather than one event.

It's a process. Because when Jesus comes, the second time, he will first gather up his bride, his church.

[11 : 11] Call that the rapture. Not because the word appears in Scripture, but the word is a Latin description of the event. The Bible says that the church, both the dead and living, in Christ's church, will be caught up, caught up to be with the Lord in the air.

That's going to happen when Jesus comes the second time. And then the believing church, his bride, will stand before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ to be purified by fire, and then enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Glorious event. And during that time, down here on this earth, the tribulation will be taking place. All right, so the rapture of the church, the catching away of the church to be with the Lord is going to take place before the seven years of tribulation on this earth.

My understanding of Eschatology. And then to bring, seven years later, to bring the tribulation to a close, then the Lord will return to the earth in all of his glory, and return with his church, and he will return to rule and reign on this earth for a thousand years.

That's the millennium. Now, when Jesus says in verse 27 in our text, and this is the point of clarification, when Jesus says in verse 27, then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

[12 : 42] He is not referring to the rapture. I'm not talking about that here. In fact, Jesus has skipped all of that and gone to the end of the seven years tribulation.

He is looking further to the glorious return, his glorious return, at the close of the great tribulation, when he comes in a cloud in all glory and majesty.

That's the focus here of the passage. This is what Jesus is referring to. And so if we connect the past two sermons that I've preached from this chapter and connected with this morning's sermon, then first we have seen, we have Jesus foreordaining the future.

Remember, that was a couple of weeks ago. Second, we have Jesus forewarning the faithful. That was last Sunday. And this morning, third, we have Jesus forecasting the finish.

Forecasting the finish. Here's where we want to focus on the second coming of Jesus Christ. The finish. The great finish. The grand finish.

[13 : 51] The glorious culmination of God's redemptive purposes. That's what we want to focus. When the King of Glory returns returns to rule and to reign.

Now, we're ready to look at the text. And there are three parts to Jesus' teaching concerning His glorious return. The first one is this. The incredible cataclysm that precedes His coming.

That's what He's talking about first. The incredible cataclysm that precedes His coming. Can you imagine this? Verse 25 says, And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars.

That is, collectively, we're talking about, He's talking about all of the heavenly lights. There will be signs in all the heavenly celestial lights.

And we know, of course, that the celestial bodies directly affect the terrestrial, this terrestrial body, our planet.

[15 : 04] And so, then Jesus says, And on the earth, distress of nations. Right? So the celestial bodies suddenly affect greatly and dramatically the terrestrial body, this planet, the seas and the waves and so forth.

And so, quite naturally, there's distress. Distress of nations with perplexity. The sea and the waves roaring. Because these things are affected by the celestial bodies.

And this sign is going to take place there. And so, then, following along, just in natural order, Jesus goes on to say, Men's hearts failing. Failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth.

For the powers of heavens will be shaken. What powers? Not God's power, but the sun, the moon, and the stars and the planetary bodies.

They will be shaken. Now, see, essentially, this is what Jesus, not essentially, directly. Jesus is talking about a total eclipse of all heavenly lights.

[16 : 18] That's the sun. The sun, the moon, the stars. And if we were to turn to Matthew's account of this same event, we'd get more information.

Matthew 24, verse 29, Jesus says, Immediately after the tribulation of those days. What days? Days that are future. The seven years of tribulation. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, so we're near the end of the tribulation, just before Christ glorious return, immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

The stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Exactly the same words Luke used. Again, a total eclipse of all heavenly lights.

That's quite a sign, isn't it? And then what? Well, Matthew goes on to record Jesus saying, then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven.

Now this is not another sign that's pointing to Jesus. Jesus himself is the sign. Coming from heaven. And Matthew goes on to record these words, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, that is the unbelieving nations and peoples on the earth.

[17 : 36] At the close of the tribulation, they will mourn, and they, all of them, will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Now think about this. Picture this in your mind. This event. No light coming from the sun. No light of the moon.

No light of the stars. No light in all of the heavens. In fact, as Joel prophesied in Joel chapter 2, verse 31, the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

And so the stage is set. And it's perfect. All the lesser lights have been extinguished. They're turned out.

And then, Jesus comes in the brightness of His glory on a cloud and every eye is on Him.

Revelation chapter 6, verse 12.

[18 : 43] Let me read that to you. I looked when He opened the sixth seal and behold, there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair and the moon became like blood and the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its light figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave, every free man hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of His wrath has come and who is able to stand? It's the same event. It's the coming of the Lord and all lights have been extinguished and in His brightness, the brightness of His glory, He comes and every eye will see Him.

Luke records this same event. We just read it. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. The prophet Daniel saw this in a vision in Daniel chapter 7 and verse 13.

I was watching in the night visions, Daniel records. And behold, one like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. You see the incredible cataclysmic event that will precede the coming of the Lord.

[20 : 17] And can you imagine what the cable news networks will do with this when these things begin to happen? Can you imagine wall-to-wall coverage? First of all, the sun goes out and the moon and the stars they fall out and there's great upheaval in the oceans and the tides and all those things and they're going to be covering that wall-to-wall.

Can you imagine what the worldwide coverage will be from the international news agencies around the globe when Jesus steps out of heaven and comes on a cloud?

When Jesus came the first time only a handful of people saw Him. I mean, Mary and Joseph and some shepherds perhaps and that's about it. No one else saw it.

No one else even cared about it. The first time the Lord of glory came in the most obscure way possible but when He comes the second time God will make sure that all eyes are on Him.

And to do so He's extinguished all other light. They won't help it. They're going to look. They're going to see. And He is going to come. Jesus said to His disciples in Luke 17 and verse 24 For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven so also the Son of Man will be in His day.

[21 : 33] The incredible cataclysm that precedes His coming. Second, notice the infallible Christ who promises His coming.

The infallible Christ who promises His coming. There will be two groups of people who will see the second coming of Christ. I mean see it with physical eyes.

Two groups of people. Both groups are mentioned here in what Jesus says in Luke 20, 21. First group is referred to in verse 27.

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now who are they? Who are they? Well, they are those distressed and perplexed in verse 25.

They are those whose hearts are failing them from fear and the expectation, the foreboding of those things which are coming on the earth.

[22 : 34] I mean, this cataclysm. Verse 26. These are unbelievers. They're unbelievers. Still living at the close of the tribulation. The second group is referred to in verse 28.

Now when these things begin to happen, look up. Lift up your heads. Now the pronoun is implied here. That is literally you look up. You people, this particular group of people, lift up your heads. Now what people are represented by the pronouns you and your? Well, that's easy. The redeemed. The saved.

The believers who are alive on the earth at the time of Christ's coming, His second coming. Those saved during the tribulation. Look up, lift up your heads.

Your Redeemer is coming. That's why he said look up, lift up your heads because your redemption draws nigh. And so there are two groups of people who will see the second coming of Christ.

[23 : 41] And Jesus promises both groups that they will see Him. That He will come and these things are going to precede His coming and He will come and they will see Him.

He promises this. The infallible Christ who promises His coming. You can take what Jesus says here to the bank. His person and therefore His word are infallible.

They are completely void of any error whatsoever. And this is backed up really by three things Jesus says in the following verses. Number one, the creation that demonstrates His infallibility. He mentions this fig tree. He says, just look at this fig tree. Part of God's creation. The creation demonstrates His infallibility. You want something tangible that you can put your hands on and touch and see and smell and so you want something tangible that demonstrates the existence of God and the sovereignty of God.

Just look at the creation. His creation. Paul wrote in Romans 1.20 for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen. Clearly seen.

[25 : 09] Being understood by the things that are made. Even His eternal power and Godhead so that they there's another reference to they unbelievers without excuse.

So you see the creation demonstrates clearly the invisible attributes of the Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And one of these invisible attributes is God's infallibility.

Infallibility in all that He does and all that He says. All of His works are infallible. That is, they're perfect. And all of His words are void of any error.

They are infallible. And so Jesus then, the consummate communicator, points to a nearby fig tree that just happens to be right there where He's standing, there in the Mount of Olives.

He says, just look at this fig tree. By the way, let me insert here, just in case you've done some reading on biblical prophecy. Some have read into this more than Jesus intended.

[26 : 13] The fig tree is not Israel. Okay? It's not Israel, yet some hold this view. And so they speculate that the budding of the fig tree refers to Israel being restored to nation status.

Have you heard this? And if that is true, which by the way, they were restored to nation status on May 14, 1948.

And so, as they conjecture, this will be the generation that sees the coming of the Lord when Israel was reestablished.

All right, so that would put the beginning of the tribulation in, depending on how you estimate or how long a generation is, puts the tribulation starting at 2013.

I don't think it started then. Though there's always been tribulation in the world and intensification of it, certainly. But I'm talking about the great tribulation.

[27 : 22] 2013, 14 maybe, 15, depending on how long a generation is, and so then the second coming will be seven years after that. And of course, with each passing year, they have to recalculate their date.

See, listen, here, make too much out of this illustration. Jesus is not specifically talking about a fig tree. A fig tree is not the point. He just happened to look up and there's a fig tree that he could use as an illustration.

Fig trees were abundant in Israel. And so it's just, he's not specifically talking about a fig tree. What's he talking about? He's talking about the leaves budding. He's talking about leaves budding. That's the idea of the illustration.

And so the type of the tree is really insignificant. In fact, it's so easy. Apparently, those who have the other view missed this. Verse 29 says, look at the fig tree and all the trees.

Just look at all of them. All the trees can't be Israel. Just look at all the trees. So what's the point? Just look at any tree, any tree. When they, that is, trees in general, are already budding, what does that tell you?

[28 : 36] What does you? Summer's coming. Well, spring and then summer. I mean, it happens like clockwork every year, doesn't it? I mean, it happens every year.

God has programmed that into his creation. It's consistent. It is unalterable. It's unmistakable. It's infallible.

That when the trees begin to bud, then you know it's spring and summer is just around the corner. It happens that way every single year. So here's the point of the parable.

When you see the leaves beginning to bud on the trees, you can believe that spring is coming or the summer is coming. And likewise, and here's the analogy, when you see the catastrophic event predicted by Jesus in verse 25, then you can believe that very shortly he's coming.

In fact, if you see those events, then you know you're going to see his coming because it's going to follow shortly after. Verse 31, so you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.

[29 : 43] See, the infallible Christ who promises his coming, the creation that demonstrates his infallibility. Second, though, or number two, the generation, the generation that corroborates his infallibility, the generation that corroborates his infallibility.

Look at verse 32. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. What things? Well, the things in verse 25 and 27.

The signs in the heavens, the lights of the heavens being extinguished, verse 25, and the coming of Christ in a cloud, verse 27. See, this generation will by no means pass away until this generation sees these things take place.

All right, so then who is this generation? This generation that will see all these things happen. Been a lot of debate about that. Number of different views.

Really only one good one. I'll give you that in a minute. I don't like to spend a lot of time delving into all the various views here, but one view is, and this is the prevalent, kind of the alternate but prevalent view, is that this generation is the generation of Jesus and his disciples.

[31 : 06] So he's saying, this generation, we here, this generation, will not pass away until this generation sees these things take place. The lights extinguished and the Son of Man coming on a cloud.

This generation. Now, if that's true, think of this logic, then Jesus is either mistaken, and he doesn't really know the future, or he has only a partial understanding of the future, so he's mistaken, or, worse than that, he's a liar, because his generation passed away without any of these things happening.

Right? The other views are simply pointless. Just pointless. Like, one is, this generation is a reference to the Jewish people.

Well, of course they're going to be here where Jesus comes. Huh? Not the ones living when Jesus said these words, but the Jewish people will be here at the end.

All right, so it's pointless to make that, make that distinction. Or some say the generation is just simply humans in general. Well, how pointless is that?

[32 : 25] Of course humans will be here. There could be humans on the planet when Jesus comes a second time. See, these views are just simply pointless, but the obvious identity of this generation would be those living when these things happen.

The last generation. Alive at the time of Christ's return. That is the most plain understanding of the past. They, that last generation, will see, they will witness the signs in the heavens, in the celestial bodies.

They will witness what follows shortly after, and that is the coming of Christ with power and great glory. So the creation that demonstrates his infallibility, the generation that corroborates his infallibility, and then also the revelation that authenticates his infallibility.

The revelation. Jesus said in verse 33, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away. What a statement on the infallibility of Christ's words. What Jesus says about his coming and everything that will be associated with it, those things are certain facts. His word.

[33 : 50] This analogy, more than you can trust the ground beneath your feet. And more than you can trust that there will be a moon and stars in the sky tonight, and that there will be a sunrise tomorrow.

More than you can trust those things, you can trust the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God's word will never ever pass away. the infallible Christ who promises his coming.

One more this morning. The invincible commitment that prepares us for his coming. The invincible commitment that prepares us for his coming, two things quickly.

people. And what Jesus says here really is for every generation. There's an application, this is applied to all generations, those specifically to that generation of believers who will be alive when Jesus comes.

verse 34. Here's the first thing. Stay faithful to the end. This is a word for every one of us.

[35 : 07] I don't know when Jesus is coming again. I do know from scripture that I'm coming with him. So are you if you are a believer.

believer, he raptures us from this world to be with him. And then when he comes in all of his glory, we will come with him.

I don't know when that's going to happen. You don't either. So stay faithful to the end. See, this has been his message woven throughout everything that he has said in this chapter.

As I mentioned a few weeks ago, every time you read in scripture, those passages that deal with future things, end time things, always those passages come with encouragement about today, about the present, how we're to live in the here and now.

So I don't know when he's coming, but I do know this, be faithful to the end. He says in verse 34, but take heed to yourselves, be on guard, lest your hearts be weighed down or overcome with, essentially, sin.

[36 : 27] Overcome with sin. That's essentially what Jesus is saying. Carousing, drunkenness, cares of this life. Be on your guard. Stay faithful to the end.

Don't let these things overcome you. don't let this day come on you unexpectedly. Don't be like unbelievers. Verse 34, for this day will come as a snare on all those who dwell in the face of the whole earth.

But you stay faithful to the end. number two, stay focused on the end.

Stay focused on it. You know, when you got up this morning, or any morning this past week, if someone were to ask you, do you believe that Jesus is coming again, you would say absolutely. but if no one asked you that, would you have thought about it at any point in the day? Or, does that fact that you believe, does that fact make any difference in what you do in your day?

[37 : 49] How you live, and how you react to certain challenges of life, and all of it. does the fact of His coming that you believe in, does it make any difference in your life?

See, this is what I'm talking about, about being focused to the end. He says in verse 36, watch therefore, be on the alert, pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, judgment, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Keep watch. Pray always. Stay faithful to the end. Stay focused on the end. And let me end this with a message to unbelievers.

I don't know about this group here. I feel like I know that I'm looking around this room and everyone here has been born again, disciples of Christ, followers of Christ.

Christ. There could be possibly maybe even just one who has not been saved. And I'm believing.

[39 : 17] And to believers here, you were to relate the truth of this passage to an unbelieving friend or family member, here's the message that you should give.

I don't know when Jesus is coming, but I can say this to unbelievers. Really, these are the words of Isaiah.

Isaiah 55 and verse 6. Seek the Lord while you may be found. I believe he can be found right now. And certainly the Lord is patient. He's not slow in his promise. but the day will come. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call upon him while he is near. I believe he's near. Seek him while he may be found.

[40 : 22] Call upon him while he is near. let the wicked forsake his way, her way. And the unrighteous thoughts forsake these.

And let him or her return to the Lord and he will have compassion and to our God return to our God for he will abundantly pardon.

But that's for now. And someday now will come to an end.

Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Thank you.