

Watchful to the End

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[0 : 00] Luke 21, verses 5 to 38. And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, ask for these things that you see.

The days will come and will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

And they asked him, teacher, when will these things be?

And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place? And he said, see that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name saying, I am he.

And the time is at hand. Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified. For these things must first take place.

But the end will not be at once. Then he said to them, nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

[1 : 11] There will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all this, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons.

And you will be the same governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer.

For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends.

And some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart.

[2 : 20] And let not those who are out in the country enter it. For these are days of vengeance to fulfill all that is written. Alas, for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days.

For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves. People fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.

For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And when they will see the Son of Man, and then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near. And he told them a parable.

[3 : 30] Look at the fig tree and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But watch yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life.

And that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the earth. Face of the whole earth.

But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man. And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on a mountain called Olivet.

And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Hopefully he won't cut in and out anymore.

[5 : 02] Jesus has been up to this point teaching every day in the temple. And ever since he entered Jerusalem at chapter 19. And some of the people that were with him were beginning to marvel at the temple, how beautiful it is, how magnificent it is.

It says verse 5, They were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings. And that spurs Jesus then to talk about how the temple will soon be destroyed and how that is connected to the coming of the end times.

And so Jesus then goes on to teach more generally about the ultimate end times that is coming as well. And his main point here for us to learn is that we should bear enduring witness to Christ, watchfully waiting for his return and our redemption.

And usually I have two or three points, but because of the, not all the points are very long. So bear with me. I'll talk about the destruction of the temple, the persecution of believers, fall of Jerusalem, disruptions in heaven and earth.

These are all things that will precede the return of Christ. And so the exhortation to us, it finally is to be watchful. And the people were marveling at the temple.

[6 : 13] And this temple, the Jewish temple that they're marveling at, is not the first Jewish temple. The first, the original temple that Solomon built was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army in 586 BC.

We see that in 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52. A second temple built was built to replace that. It was built by the returning Jewish exiles from the Babylonian exile in 516 BC.

It was led by Ezra and Nehemiah and Zerubbabel. But it says in Ezra chapter three, verse 12, that many of the priests and Levites and heads of father's houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid.

Because compared to the first temple, the second temple was so shoddy and insignificant, they wept at the sight of it being erected. But when Herod I became the Roman king of Judea, ruling at the behest of the Roman emperor over the Jewish people in Judea, in the first century BC, he engaged in a lot of building projects to kind of showcase his greatness.

And one of those projects was a complete refurbishment of the second temple. He overhauled it from top to bottom, building new foundation walls and enlarging the temple area by about 200,000 square yards, about twice the size of the original second temple, size of 30 football fields, to about 200,000 square yards.

[7 : 48] And this construction took over 80 years, and it was still ongoing, but still a lot of it was done by the time Jesus was ministering. It was undoubtedly an impressive structure, and so people are marveling at how it was adorned with noble stones, good quality stones, and offerings, which is a reference to ornaments of the temple dedicated to God, including like the gold-plated gates and such.

And the first century Roman historian Tacitus described this temple as immensely opulent.

Archaeologists have found stones that are 42 feet long, 11 feet high, and 14 feet deep, weighing over a million pounds that were used in the construction of this temple.

These massive stones, if the temple were still, if the second temple were still intact, if it were still there, it would be more massive, these stones that were used, than any other ancient temple that existed.

Now, the ornaments were similarly extravagant. First century Jewish historian Josephus writes that the gate opening into the temple was completely overlaid with gold, as was the whole wall around it. It had above it golden vines from which hung grape clusters as tall as a man, and it had golden doors 55 cubits high and 16 broad. Before these hung a veil of equal length of Babylonian tapestry with embroidery of blue and fine linen, of scarlet also, and of purple, wrought with marvelous skill.

[9 : 20] It had columns that rose 40 feet high, and they were so thick that Josephus reports that it took three grown men to try to stretch out their arms in order to get around it.

So imagine columns like the giant sequoias of the redwood forests. If the temple still stood today, we would be in awe of it, we'd take pictures of it.

But Jesus is not impressed. He says in verse 6, As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

This is because, as Jesus said to these people in Luke 19.46, they had turned a house of prayer into a den of robbers, a hideout for people who do evil things outside of the temple in their own lives and then come to find refuge.

Instead of a place to seek God, it had been reduced to a den of robbers. So Jesus, because they rejected the messianic king that God sent, Jesus pronounced that the temple will be destroyed.

[10:41] And so he tells them here, and as people, I think we tend to value these kinds of visible monuments and historical landmarks, but Jesus is telling us, reminding us, they don't last forever.

Consider the Massachusetts State House, designed by the same architect that designed the White House with its gilded 23-carat gold dome, or consider the famed Faneuil Hall, indelibly etched into American history.

Many of you are Harvard students. Consider Harvard's Memorial Hall with high arched ceilings, timber roof, decorated with these august portraits of important people and lighted by stained glass windows, or the Weiner's Library, which, according to a college guidebook, is colonnaded on its front by immense pillars with elaborate Corinthian capitals, all of which stand at the head of a flight of stairs that would not disgrace the capital in Washington.

Or consider MIT's McLaurin Building, which forms a U around the grassy Killian Court, facing the beautiful Charles River, with an impressive colonnade facade, and topped by 100 feet wide great dome modeled after the great Parthenon of Rome.

Consider all these things, their buildings, their illustrated history, their revered traditions, their unparalleled reputations, and yet God is not impressed.

[12:25] We think these things will last. But they don't last forever. The people who were with us are not impressed by the external grandeur of the Jewish temple, but Jesus tells them not to be impressed because it will not last.

Remember what God said in Isaiah chapter 66, verses 1 to 2, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What is the house that you would build for me?

And what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, but this is the one to whom I will look, he who is humble, and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

That's what God ultimately cares about, about us. He doesn't need us to do anything for him.

There's nothing we can do to make him more glorious than he already is.

There's nothing we can give to him that he doesn't already own. If we really understand this truth, it will set us free from being captive to this world.

[13:37] All worldly fame and recognition, what school you went to, where you work, what your position is, how much you earn, all worldly riches, the car you drive, the house you live in, the clothes you wear, all worldly accomplishments, the degrees you hold, the patents you earn, the laws you pass, the problems you solve, and the buildings you design, these things do not endure forever.

What God cares about is that you are of humble and contrite spirit, and that you tremble at his word.

What God cares about is that you do all your work, all these things, not out for your own glory, not out of love for yourself, but out of love for him, that you study, write, code, build, and work for him in faith and obedience.

That's what gets God's attention. A person who is inwardly humble, submitted to him, not things that are outwardly grandiose. And the people are so startled by Jesus' prophecy because the temple was the center of their worship.

And so they ask him in verse 7, Teacher, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place? The destruction of the temple would be the end of life as they know it, and it would portend for them the beginning of the end times and the coming of the kingdom of God.

And so Jesus answers their question not only by speaking of the signs that lead up to the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem, but also more generally about the ultimate end, about his second coming.

[15:25] But before he talks about these signs, Jesus tells them about what are not signs, things that will happen before the fall of Jerusalem, but are not necessarily indicators that the end is about to come.

He says in verses 8 to 9, See that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name, saying, I am he, and the time is at hand. Do not go after them, and when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.

There will be people that come claiming to be the Messiah, saying, I am he. There will be timetables given, saying that it is now the time, the end time has come.

There will be false rumors about Messiahs. Likewise, there will also be rumors of war and tumults. He says, You will hear of wars and tumults. There will be rumblings of war all throughout the world, but we should not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once. These rumors of the Messiah, rumors of wars and revolutions are par for the course after the time of Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension. They're not unusual events.

[16:38] They will characterize life after Jesus' ascension. These are not necessarily indicators that Christ's coming is imminent. We know of at least two Messianic pretenders that existed right after Jesus' time before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

Those are recorded in Acts 5.36 and Acts 21.38 as well. So this really did happen. It was fulfilled. But until Christ returns, we need not be terrified because we are not living in the dark.

We expect these things. And then Jesus gives us a summary statement in verses 10-11 of the signs that will precede the end that there will be wars among nations and natural disasters and unusual phenomena in the sky and land.

And then Jesus elaborates on these in the following passages. It kind of serves as a thesis statement for verses 20-26, verse 10 and verse 11 does. But before all of these designs will take place, Jesus says further in verse 12 that there will be persecution of believers.

That's my second point. They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. And you will be the things and governors for my name's sake.

[17:56] Persecution, according to Jesus, is not a sign that the end is imminent. Persecution, and here, followers of Christ, he says, will be delivered up to the synagogues and prisons, which suggests religious authorities.

And also, we will be brought before kings and governors, which suggests civil authorities, political authorities. And all of this persecution will be, Jesus says, for my name's sake.

This phrase is repeated twice in this passage, here in verse 12 and later in verse 17. Already in Luke, John the Baptist has been imprisoned for bearing witness to Jesus.

And other followers of Jesus are imprisoned in Luke's sequel in the book of Acts up to 16 times. And then, they testify before civil authorities on many occasions.

And all of that happens because of Jesus, for the sake of Jesus' name. That phrase is repeated 17 times in the book of Acts. It shows the centrality of a Christian's allegiance to Jesus.

[19:00] That's what our lives are to be about. About the name of Jesus, advancing his name, we live for his sake and not our own. So if I were to ask you, is it obvious to those around you that you are living for Jesus' name's sake?

Or are they more likely to conclude when they observe your life from the outside that you are living for your own sake? This is a question that we all need to ask ourselves because often the absence of persecution is a sign not of how principled and moral our society is, but of how impoverished our witness to Christ is.

persecution is not out of the ordinary for the Christian. It's normal. It's to be expected in the life following Jesus' ascension.

And Jesus says in verse 13, this will be your opportunity to bear witness. We will be persecuted for bearing witness to Jesus, but the persecution itself will provide further opportunities, a platform for bearing witness to Jesus because when people mock us for our faith, when people persecute us for our faith, when people bring us to public courts, we're being brought for the hearing of many.

Our faith is becoming made an issue and gives us an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus and tell them about our faith and about the hope that we have in Jesus. And so it's an opportunity for witness.

[20:38] This is kind of really a radical way to think about it and look at it because if preserving ourselves or promoting ourselves is the primary goal of our lives, then persecution, of course, is undesirable.

It's a setback. It's a disappointment. But if proclamation of Jesus, if promoting Christ is our ultimate goal in life, then persecution is not a setback or a disappointment.

it's an opportunity, a golden chance to bear witness to Jesus and how precious he is to us. And he says we need not worry about persecution because it's not a threat to us.

It's an opportunity and Jesus will teach us by his spirit what to say. He says in verses 14 to 15, settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.

Jesus said something very similar earlier in Luke 12 verses 11 to 12 when he said that when we're brought for trial to the religious authorities that we don't need to worry about defending ourselves or worry about what to say because he said therefore the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

[22 : 04] That's what Jesus is promising here. I will give you a mouth and wisdom and that phrase mouth and wisdom recalls Exodus chapter 4 verses 10 to 12 when God calls Moses to go to Egypt to deliver Israel from their captivity and this is Moses' excuse.

He says O my Lord I am not eloquent either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant but I am slow of speech and of tongue but the Lord said to him who has made man's mouth who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind is it not I the Lord now therefore go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.

God who created the human mouth God who is the embodiment of all wisdom will himself help you when you are being interrogated persecuted for the sake of Jesus' name.

So you need not worry. God will teach you what to say and help you to say it. How many times have you given that excuse the same excuse that Moses has given for not bearing witness to Jesus?

I'm not eloquent. I'm slow of speech. I don't have all the answers. When God gives you an opportunity to witness in that context you don't need to worry about being ridiculed persecuted mocked for your beliefs.

[23 : 44] When that happens when the opportunity comes Jesus himself the Lord God himself will give you a wisdom and a mouth to speak.

And we see this fulfilled throughout the book of Acts. Jesus continues in verses 16 and 17 you'll be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends and some of you they will put to death.

You'll be hated by all for my namesake. In some cases followers of Jesus will even be betrayed by their parents brothers relatives and friends. some of them will be put to death.

This shows what Luke has been saying over and over again throughout the gospel that our allegiance to Jesus must trump even our allegiance to our family members. We will be hated by many for his namesake.

All I think here is hyperbolic all kinds of people will hate us because of our allegiance to Christ. But Jesus promises in verses 18 to 19 not a hair of your head will perish.

[24 : 52] By your endurance you will gain your lives. A single strand of hair is really the most insignificant part of our bodies.

We lose about hundred strands of hair per day. I know that's hard to believe but that's what they estimate. So saying not a hair of your head will perish is metaphorical. Jesus is saying here no harm will come upon you.

Now if you're paying attention that should raise the question how can that be possibly the case? Didn't Jesus just say literally some of you they will put to death?

That sounds like a little more than a hair to me. The context suggests here that Jesus is not speaking of temporal well-being but of our eternal well-being.

It's similar to what Jesus says in Matthew 10 28 do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul whether fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[25 : 57] Your soul God is saying which you have entrusted to me is in my sovereign hands and no one can touch you. Even your body they might kill but I will raise you up in a new glorious resurrection body in the end.

So don't you fear them. Not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance even through death you will gain your lives. The word life there lives there is often translated soul.

It's the same more that Jesus used in Luke 9 23 25 That's the saving of life that Jesus is talking about.

Yes you might die for his name sake but your soul will be well you will be preserved to the end. If you endure through persecution not a hair of your head will perish.

Endurance is a Christian virtue that is praised often throughout the New Testament. It assumes difficulty. You don't endure something that's easy. Bearing witness to Jesus living as a Christian will not come easily.

[27 : 25] It requires endurance, perseverance. It will come with its own share of suffering and persecution. But Jesus teaching us here that it's worth it.

We must endure. And then in verses 20 to 24 Jesus returns to the topic of the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem. He says But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies that know that its desolation has come near.

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains and let those who are inside the city depart and let not those who are out in the country enter it for these are days of vengeance to fulfill all that is written alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days for there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people you will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations the siege of Jerusalem will bring its desolation and this will be so severe Jesus predicts that those who live in the wider region around the city should depart they should flee into the mountains those who are inside the city should depart and leave the city and those who are just outside the city in the country should not enter it everyone should avoid Jerusalem because that's how severe the judgment will be because and this was fulfilled in 70 AD in 66 AD the Jewish people in

Jerusalem they rebelled against the Roman per Vespasian besieged Jerusalem and eventually destroyed both the Jewish temple and the city in 70 AD so it will be Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled this remark in verse 24 shows the Gentile predominance in the age that continues after Jesus ascension and that will be the case until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled that's likely related to the idea in Genesis 48 verse 19 where Jacob also named Israel places his hands on his grandson Ephraim and he blesses him and he says this as he's blessing him his seed would become the fullness of the nations fullness of the Gentiles which in turn is related to God's promise to Abraham that all nations all peoples will be blessed and so salvation is from the Jews because it comes through a Jewish Messiah Jesus Christ many of the Jews however rejected the Messiah and their hearts were hardened leading to Jerusalem's destruction but Jesus prophesies here that a time is coming when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled this remark seems to hold out hope that there will be a future restoration of Israel there will be people there will be an influx of Jews that come to faith in Jesus Christ Paul is likely referring to this as well in Romans chapter 11 verse 25 when he addresses Gentile believers this way lest you be wise in your own sight I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery brothers a partial hardening has come upon

[30 : 57] Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in it's not a full hardening of the Jews there's a partial hardening so that many of the Jews reject Jesus some of them still come to receive Jesus but a time is coming when that hardening will be lifted and that will be after the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled that's the age we're living in now when I was a student at seminary I worked part time at the center for the study of global Christianity and in their publication called the Atlas of Global Christianity it chronicles the shifts in the gravitational center of global Christianity starting from 30 AD to present day and the center of gravity for the early church was predictably Jerusalem in 30 AD and then it gradually shifted north and west so that its gravitational center was Constantinople what's now Istanbul in

Turkey around 1000 AD and by 1500 AD the gravitational center of Christianity has shifted further north into what is now Budapest Hungary and Vienna Austria and by 1900 AD it had shifted further west due in large part to the rise of the US and the gravitational center was in Madrid Spain and since then the gravitational center of Christianity has been shifting southeast rather than northwest so that it's now in Niger Africa it's expected to continue this shift into southeast into Nigeria over the next 50 years it actually seems to have been going around full circle back to the Middle East toward Jerusalem just hundred years ago the countries with the largest population of Christians were US Russia Germany France Britain in that order got America China Russia China and Mexico in other words Christianity has flourished in the Middle East in Eastern Europe in Western Europe the United States in South America and now in Africa and Asia as well it's the times of the Gentiles is being fulfilled.

All nations all over the ends of the ends of the earth are coming to faith in Jesus Christ and now contrast that with Islam. The center of gravity for Islam is now in the Middle East.

It has always been in the Middle East. Hinduism's center of gravity, Buddhism's center of gravity have both always been in Asia now and at its inception.

[33 : 52] The gospel of Jesus Christ, however, is for all nations. He has always been, has always had an outward orientation.

It was God's intention that through Israel, through the coming of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ, that salvation would come to all peoples. and this is why we as a church is part of the great mission of God to evangelize the nations.

That's why we pray for the nations and the people groups. Because God intends for His good news to be heard among all the nations. We're still living in fulfillment of this prophecy of what Jesus said in Acts 1.8.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

That's why we should bear enduring witness to Christ, watchfully waiting for His return and our redemption. So having answered the question about the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem and about the signs that precede those events, Jesus now turns His attention in verse 25 to the signs of the ultimate end.

[35 : 13] And this is because, as I said before, the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple is connected to the Jewish perception of the end times.

It signals the view of the end. That means the end is imminent. Not in the sense that, you know, it's going to be next week or next year, but in the sense that the hourglass has been turned over, the clock is ticking.

It's impending. The end and Christ's return is impending in the same way that yours and my death is impending. Not that we're going to die next week.

We might. We don't know that. But that it's looming and coming inevitably. Time is ticking. Our days are numbered. The finish line is visible.

The end is in sight. And the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem has marked that. And this final end will be preceded by the following signs in verses 25 to 26.

[36 : 20] There will be signs in sun and moon and stars and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves. People fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

The nations that were reigning over the Jews and over the world will now experience distress because of the roaring of the sea and the waves.

This is probably connected to the great earthquakes that were mentioned earlier in verse 11. And there will be signs in sun, moon, and stars. The powers of the heavens will be shaken. This is connected to the terrors and great signs from heaven mentioned also in verse 11.

We don't know what these signs entail exactly. The details are not known to us. But we know that they will be cosmic in scope and we know that they will be terrifying according to what Jesus is describing here.

It will make people faint with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. It will make normal people not, you know, very superstitious and speculative people that are always kind of a little bit worried and but it will make normal people fearful, full of foreboding for what is coming to the world.

[37 : 39] And only after these signs will Christ return. It says in verses 27 to 28, and then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near. Jesus is here making a direct allusion to Daniel chapter 7 verses 13 to 14 where Daniel prophesied that a man like, someone like a Son of Man will come to God to the Ancient of Days and you will be given dominion, glory and a kingdom and that all peoples and nations and language should serve him.

And so, I think when this presence of God coming in a cloud, I think when most people think about it, we imagine the Renaissance pictures that we've seen of Jesus kind of riding a cloud like you're riding on a longboard or a skateboard.

You know, it's like, but that's not what Luke is talking about here. It says that He comes in a cloud. Right? This is the same language that was used in Luke 9, 34-35.

When a cloud came and overshadowed Jesus and His disciples and a voice came out of the cloud saying, This is my Son, my Chosen One.

[38 : 59] Listen to Him. So the cloud is not just a vehicle for Jesus. It's actually a representation of God's presence, of Jesus' divine presence.

Just like the pillar of cloud that represents Jesus at the Exodus, in Exodus 13, a cloud here signifies the presence of God, the revelation of deity.

So Jesus then is saying this, right now He is veiled in His glory. He's the Son of Man, the Messianic King. But at His second coming He will come in His full divine glory and power as the Son of God. And He will ascertain the nations. So when these things, the signs that Jesus has spoken of, begin to take place, He instructs us and His disciples, straighten up, raise your head, because your redemption is drawing near.

While the nations and the kingdoms are cowering with fear and foreboding about what is coming on the world, we are to straighten up and raise our heads confidently because we know exactly what is coming in the end.

[40 : 10] We are not a people who fear the end times. We do not fear doomsday. We are people who watchfully wait for the end because our redemption is drawing near.

This is referring not to our redemption from sin, which Jesus accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection, but to our redemption from our sinful, broken world and the redemption of our bodies.

Paul speaks of this in Romans 8, for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

That's what all creation longs for because our creation is fallen. The brokenness that we see in the created order is a result of the fall. It's been subjected to futility and will be redeemed just like our sinful flesh is a result of the fall.

[41 : 33] And that too will be redeemed. Our bodies will be redeemed. And so we are to be confident and wait expectantly for Jesus' return. And that brings me to my final point which is the main exhortation of this passage.

Be watchful. Jesus first tells a parable in verses 29 to 31. Look at the fig tree and all the trees. As soon as they come out and leave you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also when you see these things take place you know that the kingdom of God is near. Fig trees were very common trees in Palestine and they are completely bare in the winter.

So in the spring when the leaves begin to shoot out the change is quite dramatic and obvious. and so that's the imagery that Jesus is using just like the shooting buds in the leaves in the spring signals the summer.

Jesus tells us that we can discern the nearness of the kingdom of God by observing the signs that he has just told us about. But look at what Jesus says so emphatically in verses 32 to 33.

[42 : 43] Truly I say to you this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.

Three times Jesus uses the word pass away here to emphasize the certainty of his teaching. This generation will not pass away until these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.

Even the thing that seems so certain to us like heaven and earth will pass away. Seems so permanent to us but my words Jesus' words are more permanent than that more enduring than that.

I don't think Jesus means here that he will return in the lifetime of his hearers if that's what he means he didn't keep his promise. Rather I think he's referring to these things that he mentions in the preceding verse in verse 31 in the lesson of the fig tree.

And the phrase these things is repeated four times in verses 5 to 9 and it refers there consistently to the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem. So Jesus is here referring to the signs that mark the beginning of the end and not to the end itself.

[43 : 56] That's why he still says the kingdom is near when these signs come not that the kingdom is fully here. Now verse 28 when these things begin to take place begin to take place straighten up and raise your head because your redemption is drawing near.

These things will begin to take place. They will be fulfilled in the lifetime of Jesus' hearers and that's exactly what happened in 70 AD.

And because that was fulfilled the return of Christ and the redemption of our bodies also will certainly happen.

In fact it's more certain than the seeming permanence of the heavens and the earth. Jesus is teaching us here to make sure we understand and are aware and expecting the return of Christ and living in light of that reality.

And that prepares his exhortation in verses 34-35 but watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap for it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth but stay awake at all times praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.

[45 : 18] Jesus brings our attention here not to millennialism Zionism Armageddon rebuilding the third temple he doesn't give us these details he's not concerned with them what he's concerned about here is that these signs that not so that they would make us always devoting ourselves to pouring ourselves over newspapers and staring out at observatories in order to accurately prognosticate the end that's not his goal his goal in telling us about these signs is that we live watchfully and faithfully that we bear enduring witness to Jesus watchfully waiting for his return and for our redemption so the word dissipation refers to kind of a drunken headache a hangover the result of the intoxication that he speaks of here drunkenness Jesus warns us not to let our hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life too many people in this world live with a spiritual hangover because they are drunk with the cares of this life with worldly concerns it's such an appropriate image because a drunk person is unprepared and unaware and oblivious incapable of what it means spiritually to be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life maybe your life is characterized by a constant pursuit of pleasure you live for the next drink for the next sexual conquest for the next high and it doesn't have to be these vices your life could also be characterized more by the ordinary cares of this life you're weighed down with dissipation by your next exam next project your next paycheck your next job your next tv show your next sports game your next vacation the ordinary cares of this life can so weigh us down with dissipation intoxicate us these things these things are dangerous because they are intoxicating they seem so ordinary and so normal and so harmless but if they steal us from being sensitive to christ and his priorities and purposes in our lives it's the same effect as being drunk on them they're intoxicating but what's the point i want to ask you dear brothers and sisters in the church what's the point of enduring all the suffering in this life fighting all the battles against sin coming faithfully ministering to each other speaking the truth and loving what's the point of doing all this and enduring this life if we're not waiting for our bridegroom we're not prostitutes used and discarded our bridegroom is coming he's preparing us right now for that glorious day of his return we are not orphans without father we are not citizens without a king our king is coming back that's why we work that's why

we pray that's why we persevere that's why we fight the battle of faith every day because we wait for him to come back to redeem us if that doesn't motivate your brothers and sisters we're not living as we ought to it's going to be difficult because we live in a world full of distractions and cares it will be difficult because the world is full of suffering and turmoil is ravaged by war and natural disasters this will be difficult bearing witness to Jesus and be faithful to him will be many false messiahs and false religions that seek to lead us astray it will be difficult because we will be persecuted by religious authorities civil authorities some of us will even be betrayed by our own friends and family we could never endure these things for the sake of anyone else in the world or for the sake of anyone else in human history but we can do it for Jesus' sake because he was the man of sorrows who suffered and died in our place on the cross because he was the true messiah that came and laid down his life to save us and make us born again because Jesus was persecuted by the religious authorities and the civil authorities for our sake because he was mocked by his friends and family because he died and was raised from the dead so that we might enjoy eternal resurrection life and so what we would never do for anyone else we do for his namesake as it says in

Hebrews 12 we read this for our assurance of pardon today therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God we can endure because Jesus endured for us because for the joy set before him of our redemption Jesus endured the cross for us so let us now for his sake bear enduring witness to Jesus and be watchful and expectant for his return and second of falling to guys to come on and just do