

Gospel of Luke 21

“When will these things happen?”

04 & 08 February 2024

How to analyze a biblical text

- Discover the ways in which an author seeks to create meaning for intended hearers or readers.
- Identify speaker, hearers, translator, editor and readers, plus their purpose, techniques and habits.
- Note discourse markers: words, phrases and forms that indicate internal logic and thought flow.
- Discern literary devices used to signal space, time, events, persons, objects, style and relationships.
- Translate the text into another language using its own discourse styles and techniques.

Background

- Other Jews also predicted that the temple would be destroyed, but they did not know when.
- Jesus mixes his predictions about the near/soon destruction of Jerusalem, and his far future return to earth from heaven.
- The destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple would occur around 70 CE, about 37 years after Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Rabbi Akiba claimed Bar Kochba was the Messiah during the second Jewish revolt (132–136 CE).
- The war with Rome would begin in 66 CE and continue after the fall of Masada in 72 CE.
- Several Gentile nations have captured and ruled over Jerusalem to this day.

Passage structure

1. Two queries: When? Sign? 5-9
2. Hearers' must endure. 10-19
3. Jerusalem's destruction. 20-24
4. Coming signs and a future sign. 25-28
5. This generation. 29-33
6. Pray to escape, ready for Jesus. 34-36

Seven content clusters

1. “When will these things happen?” (7).
2. “The end will not come right away” (9).
3. “Before all this” (12).
4. “Wrath against this people” (23).
5. “Jerusalem surrounded by armies” (20).
6. “That day will close on you” (34).
7. “The end” (9).

1. “When will these things happen?” (7)

⁵ Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ⁶ “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.”

⁷ “Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

Three queries

Luke 21:4

1. “When will these things happen?”
2. “What will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

Matthew 24:3

3. “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

- ‘When?’: Jesus will lay out a mixed near-future and far-future chronology.
- ‘Sign’: Omen or portent perceived to give evidence of a future event or of hidden reality.
- ‘The sign’: “When you see...”

Sign → Stones thrown down

Sign → Coming + End of the age



2. “The end will not come right away” (9)

⁸ He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them. ⁹ When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.”

- ‘I am he’: false religion.
- ‘The time is near’: enthusiastic Christians
- ‘The End’: End of the present age, start of the new.

3. “Before all this” (12)

¹² “But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. ¹³ And so you will bear testimony to me. ¹⁴ But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵ For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ Everyone will hate you because of me. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ Stand firm, and you will win life.

- ‘Words and wisdom’: How to reply to accusers.
- ‘Hate you’: ‘because of me’ (not because of our bigotry).
- ‘Death’: ‘you will win life’.

4. “Wrath against this people” (23)

¹⁰ Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

²² For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. ²³ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations.

³⁴ “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen...

- ‘wrath’: Rome slaughtered 100s of 1000s. Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War (c. 75 CE).
- ‘this people’: Israelites in all provinces.
- ‘The whole earth’: Greek, *gḗ*, ~‘the whole land (of Israel),’ as in verse 23.

5. "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" (20)

²⁰ "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.

²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.

²⁴ Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

³² "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

- 'Armies': Roman legions under Titus Caesar Vespasianus (39-81 CE).
- 'Gentiles': Roman troops recruited from Edom, Moab, Ammon and Arabia.
- 'The times': The temple mount remains under Gentile occupation to this day.

6. "That day will close on you" (34)

²⁴ The times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

- 'signs': 'fearful events' that point to something else. To what?
- 'the world': Greek, 'the peoples (ethnicities)'.
- 'the Son of Man': Daniel 7:14. Jesus himself.

7. "The end" (9)

¹¹ The times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

²⁷ The Son of Man ... with power and great glory

²⁸ Your redemption.

³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

- 'Times of the Gentiles': From the Babylonian captivity until Messiah's advent. (Rev. 19:15).
- 'Your redemption': The first resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6).
- 'Heaven and earth': Made new merged (Rev. 21:1).

