

How to Interpret Bible Prophecy Luke 24:5-36

ETS: Jesus taught about the future

ESS: We need to understand how to interpret Bible prophecy

OSS: I want people to know how to study the Scriptures

PQ: Are you ready for the return of Jesus?

UW: Interpret

WE

New Series: **Jesus Teaches About the End Times**

Today: How to Interpret Bible Prophecy

The “END TIMES” has always been the “rage”

- People have been predicting the End of the World for thousands of years.

There are **many views** about the End Times

- Some believe the **world** will become **Christianized** and **then Christ will return**
- Others believe there will be a **rapture** of the **church**, followed by **7 years of Tribulation**, **then Jesus returns** and reigns for 1,000 years in Jerusalem

- Others believe the **church will go through the 7 years of Tribulation** (or most of it) and then Jesus returns and reigns for 1,000 years in Jerusalem
- Others believe the **church will go through the 7 years of Tribulation** (or most of it) and then Jesus returns and we **immediately** enter into the **New Heaven and New Earth**.
- Others believe what we are going to look at in **Luke 21 has already been fulfilled**

What do we do with **Luke 21**?

- **Ignore** it and say “It’s too complicated”; “Let’s talk about God’s love and grace.” Or “It will all pan out in the end, when it happens it happens.”
- Say “Jesus said He’s coming back” and **ignore** the rest of the **teaching**
- Pull our **favorite end times author** and accept whatever he/she says.

My job is to “**Equip the saints to do the work of the ministry**” and part of that equipping is to teach you how to study the Scriptures.

- I want you to be students of the Word.

Before we dive into **Luke 21** over the next few weeks, I want to teach you: **How to Interpret Bible Prophecy**

GOD

Turn to **Luke 21**

Recorded in **Matthew, Mark and Luke**

- Called the Olivet Discourse because **Matthew 24:3** says Jesus said these words on the **Mount of Olives** as He and the disciples were looking across the **Kidron Valley** at the **Temple**.

Luke 21:5-36 “As some were talking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, 6 “These things that you see—the days will come when not one stone will be left on another that will not be thrown down.” “Teacher,” they asked him, “so when will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”

8 Then he said, “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Don’t follow them. 9 When you hear of wars and rebellions, don’t be alarmed. Indeed, it is necessary that these things take place first, but the end won’t come right away.”

10 Then he told them, "Nation will be raised up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be violent earthquakes, and famines and plagues in various places, and there will be terrifying sights and great signs from heaven. 12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you. They will hand you over to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. 13 This will give you an opportunity to bear witness. 14 Therefore make up your minds not to prepare your defense ahead of time, 15 for I will give you such words and a wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will even be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends. They will kill some of you. 17 You will be hated by everyone because of my name, 18 but not a hair of your head will be lost. 19 By your endurance, gain your lives.

20 "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that its desolation has come near. 21 Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. Those inside the city must leave it, and those who are in the country must not enter it, 22 because these are days of vengeance to fulfill all the things that are written. 23 Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days, for there will be great distress in the land and wrath

against this people. 24 They will be killed by the sword and be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 “Then there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and there will be anguish on the earth among nations bewildered by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and expectation of the things that are coming on the world, because the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to take place, stand up and lift your heads, because your redemption is near.”

29 Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 As soon as they put out leaves you can see for yourselves and recognize that summer is already near. 31 In the same way, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all things take place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

34 “Be on your guard, so that your minds are not dulled from carousing, drunkenness, and worries of life, or that

day will come on you unexpectedly 35 like a trap. For it will come on all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 But be alert 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.”

WHY should you learn “How to Interpret Bible Prophecy?”

Avoid Deception

- **Luke 21:8-9** Then he said, “Watch out that you are not **deceived**. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Don’t follow them. 9 When you hear of wars and rebellions, don’t be alarmed. Indeed, it is necessary that these things take place first, but the end won’t come right away.”
 - In Matthew’s account, Jesus uses the word “Deceive” 3x’s
 - **Matthew 24:4-5, 11:** “Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and they will deceive many... Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”

Remember, **Satan** is a LIAR and he is the **Master Deceiver!**

We live in an era of **DECEPTION**

- **Do not believe** everything you see and hear- including those things from your favorite news source!
 - Video and audio editing, AI technology, photoshop, etc., enable the manipulation of images and sound.
- The ability to deceive is greater than **ever** in this age of social media, 24-hour news, the ability to create social **contagions**, propaganda, etc.

How do we avoid being “**deceived**”?

- **Proverbs 9:10** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
 - Know the Scriptures
 - Fear the Lord; don’t fear people!
- If something **doesn’t sound right** or **make sense**, don’t **blindly follow** what you are told!
 - *Do your research, use your mind, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.*

How do we avoid being “**deceived**”?

- Know Christ as your Savior = Holy Spirit
- Know the Scriptures
 - Learning how to interpret Bible Prophecy

How do you interpret Bible Prophecy?

When you study Bible Prophecy....

Search for LOCATION clues

Where is the location?

- **Luke 21:20** “When you see **Jerusalem** surrounded by **armies**
 - Specifically, the **temple (vs. 5)**
- Jesus makes references to “**nations**” and “**kingdoms**” but we do not know which ones

When you study Isaiah, **Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah**, and **other Old Testament** prophets, you will find **numerous prophetic passages** with nations mentioned by name.

- Remember, these were **nations as they existed 2,000-4,000 years ago**, so the name is not as important as **the geographical region** they occupied then and today.

But THIS prophecy in **Luke 21 specifically** involves **Jerusalem** and the **temple**.

When you study Bible Prophecy....

Search for People clues

We also have a clue about **WHO** is involved

- **Luke 21:23** “Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days, for there will be great distress *in the land* and wrath against *this people*.”
 - Who are the people “in the land” where Jerusalem and the temple are located?
 - The Jews
 - Notice Jesus specifically refers to them as “This people”

Conclusion: The **Jews** must be *in the land* and occupying **Jerusalem** when this future event occurs.

- Are they living “in the land” when Jesus predicted this? Yes!
- Is the temple standing when Jesus predicted this? Yes!
- Is Jerusalem standing when Jesus predicted this? Yes!

Luke 21:26-27 People will faint from fear and expectation of the things that are coming on the world, because the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

When you study Bible Prophecy....

Search for Timing clues

Luke 21:9 “When you hear of wars and rebellions, don’t be alarmed. Indeed, it is necessary that these things take place first, *but the end won’t come right away.*”

- What does this tell us?
 - “**Wars and rebellions**” **do not mean the end has arrived!**
 - There have **always been** wars and rebellions.
 - Many people thought **Hitler** was the **Anti-Christ** because he persecuted the Jews and started WW2, but Jesus said “**wars and rebellions**” must “**take place first.**”
 - Sounds like “**wars and rebellions**” can **set the stage** for the end!
 - But the “*end won’t come right away*” apparently after the stage has been set.

Are there more **timing clues**? Yes!

Luke 21:10-12a Then he told them, “Nation will be raised against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be violent earthquakes, and famines and plagues in various places, and there will be terrifying sights and great signs from heaven. 12 *But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you*

What happens ***BEFORE*** the “nations rise against nations, earthquakes, famines, plagues in various places, and terrifying sights and signs from heaven?”

- *But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you....*

Jesus is speaking to His disciples because they call Him “**Teacher**” in **Luke 21:7**

- According to the **Gospel of Mark**, “Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately”
- According to the **Gospel of Matthew**, “The disciples approached him privately and said...”
 - At the **MINIMUM**, it was “Peter, James, John, and Andrew” who Jesus is talking about or it is “His disciples.”
- At the **MINIMUM**, Peter, James, John, and Andrew would be ...
 - Handed over to the synagogues and prisons

- Brought before kings and governors because of my name.
- Betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends.
- Some will be killed
- Hated by everyone because of my name

WHEN are the disciples going to be persecuted and some killed?

- Before nations rising against nations, kingdoms rising against kingdoms, earthquakes, famines, plagues in various places, and terrifying sights and signs from heaven?

That limits the timeframe to **within 30-50 years of Jesus' predictions** if the disciples lived a **normal lifespan**, *which in the first century was about 50 years.*

Are there more timing clues? Yes!

- **Luke 21:20** "When **you** see Jerusalem surrounded by armies."

Since Jesus is talking to **His disciples**, some of them **will see this event occur**, *which means Jerusalem was going to be surrounded by armies in the next 30-50 years.*

Jesus says that Jerusalem is going to be “desolated” (v. 20) and the we have ANOTHER TIMING CLUE...

- **Luke 21:24** “and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles (WHEN?) until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
 - How long is the “times of the Gentiles”?

Jesus doesn't give us a LENGTH to the Times of the Gentiles, so How will we know WHEN the “Times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled?

Jesus gives ANOTHER Timing clue....

- **Luke 21:25-26** “Then there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and there will be anguish on the earth among nations bewildered by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and expectation of the things that are coming on the world, because the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”
- These are markers that the “Time of the Gentiles” is ending
 - There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and there will be anguish on the earth among nations bewildered by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

Jesus gives ANOTHER Timing clue....

- **Luke 21:27** “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Let’s **sum** up the **timing sequence**:

1. **BEFORE** the “nations rise against nations, earthquakes, famines, plagues in various places, and terrifying sights and signs from heaven” the disciples will be “persecuted, hated, and some killed”
2. While some of the disciples are alive, they are going to witness Jerusalem surrounded by armies, laid desolate, the temple torn apart, and the Gentiles overrunning Jerusalem.
 - a. So in the next few decades of this prediction these things are going to happen
3. There is an *undefined period* when the Gentiles will control Jerusalem (the Times of the Gentiles)
4. The **Time of the Gentiles** will end with signs in the heavens, earthquakes, famines, etc. followed by the Return of Jesus.

Look at what Jesus said in **Luke 21:24** “They (those in Jerusalem) will be killed by the sword and be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

- Those who survive are going to be “scattered into all the nations.”
 - IF the GENTILES are in control of Jerusalem, HOW can those prophecies be fulfilled?

Look at what Jesus does in **Luke 21:29**: “Then he told them a parable...”

- Why does Jesus tell a parable?
 - Parables use **earthly elements** to teach a spiritual meaning

When you study Bible Prophecy....

Search for Scriptural Explanations for Symbols

What earthly things are in this parable? “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 As soon as they put out leaves you can see for yourselves and recognize that summer is already near.”

- Trees!
 - Does Jesus highlight a SPECIFIC TREE? Yes!
 - The “**FIG TREE**”

Why does Jesus specifically mention a “Fig tree”?

- If you go back to **Luke 13**, Jesus told a parable about a fig tree.

When you look at the parable it is clear that...

- The **vineyard** owner represented God
- The **gardener**, or vineyard keeper who cares for the trees represented Jesus
- The **fig tree** represented both the nation of Israel and the individual.

You will also find the connection between the fig tree and Israel throughout the Old Testament.

Let's go back to our timing....

- The last thing we had regarding Jerusalem was that it would be **trampled on by the Gentiles** until the **"Times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."**
- Then Jesus describes **His second coming**, which ends the **Times of the Gentiles.**

Why the Parable?

- Jesus is giving us a **"heads up"**
 - Clearly, we are beyond the lifetimes of His disciples and those living at this point

What's the "heads up"?

Luke 21:29-30 “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 As soon as they put out leaves you can see for yourselves and recognize that summer is already near.”

- When trees put on leaves what is that a sign of? Life!
- When trees put on leaves what is that a sign of? A new season is coming

In the same way, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.”

- Since the Scriptures identify the “fig tree” with **Israel**, what is Jesus saying?

Jesus is saying “When you see the Fig Tree (i.e., Israel) putting on leaves (i.e., coming to life) recognize that the kingdom of God is near.”

- Here is another TIMING indicator

Let’s **sum** up the **timing sequence**:

1. **BEFORE** the “nations rise against nations, earthquakes, famines, plagues in various places, and terrifying sights and signs from heaven” the disciples will be “persecuted, hated, and some killed”
2. While some of the disciples are alive, they are going to witness Jerusalem surrounded by armies, laid desolate, the temple torn apart, and the Gentiles overrunning Jerusalem.

- a. So in the next few decades of this prediction these things are going to happen
3. There is an *undefined period* when the Gentiles will control Jerusalem (the Times of the Gentiles)
4. The **Time of the Gentiles** will end with signs in the heavens, earthquakes, famines, etc. followed by the Return of Jesus.
5. **BEFORE** the Return of Jesus and the end of the Times of the Gentiles, Israel will come back to life!

What about those who will be ALIVE when Israel comes back to life?

- **Luke 21:32** Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all things take place.”

Does the Scripture indicate the **length** of a **generation**?

Yes!

- We will talk more about this in upcoming sermons on this passage

Are there more **timing clues**? Yes!

- **Luke 21:31-32** In the same way, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all things take place.

When you study Bible Prophecy....

Near Fulfillments are Often Templates for Future Fulfillment

Often the **prophet**, *or in this case Jesus*, gives a **prediction** of **something** that will **happen** in the **not-too-distant future**, that will serve as a **template** for a final prophetic event.

What did Jesus predict?

Regarding **Jerusalem**, Jesus predicted....

- **v. 6:** Not one stone would be left on another in the Temple
- **v 20:** Jerusalem surrounded by armies
- **v. 24:** Those in Jerusalem will be killed by the sword
- **v. 24** Those in Jerusalem will be led captive to the nations
- **v. 24:** Jerusalem will be overrun by Gentiles

Did this happen? Yes!

- In 66-70AD a rebellion by the Jews against Rome broke out.

- Ultimately, in **70 AD** the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem (“**When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies**”)
 - The Romans used battering rams and siege towers to breach the outer walls within weeks.

By the time of the **siege**, the **Gospels** were in **full circulation** so the **Christians** knew Jesus’ predictions.

- According to an early church historian, **Eusebius of Caesarea**, the **Christians fled** Jerusalem when they saw the Roman armies coming. However, the unbelieving Jews (who were the majority) did not flee.

According to **historical accounts** by Jewish historian, **Josephus**, the siege dragged on for months, leading to widespread famine and disease inside the city and the people even resorted to cannibalism.

- In **late summer of 70 A.D.**, the Romans finally breached the last wall and entered the city. The Second Temple, a focal point of the rebellion, was set ablaze and was torn down brick by brick. Only the outer Western Wall remained.
- According to Josephus about 1.1 million people were killed in the siege.

The **fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.** was the beginning of the “**Times of the Gentiles.**”

- The Jewish population was significantly reduced
- The Romans were in full control
- The Temple was destroyed, and the sacrificial system was stopped
- It was the beginning of Jerusalem’s “**Desolation**”

Decades later the Romans rebuilt the city and renamed it Aelia Capitolina.

- **Aelia**, was the family name of the Roman emperor Hadrian (ruled 117-138 AD)
- **Capitolina**: This refers to the **Capitoline Triad**, the three most important Roman gods: **Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.**
 - So the city was named after the **Emperor** and the **Roman** gods

Emperor Hadrian also **built a temple** to **Jupiter** on the **Temple Mount**, the former site of the Second Jewish Temple.

The **Jews revolted** against this desecration of the Temple Mount and led to the **Bar Kokhba revolt (132-135 AD).**

- The remaining Jews were **kicked out of Jerusalem**

- Emperor Hadrian renamed the area **Syria Palaestina** (Palestine) to erase any memory of the Jews.

IF we follow our Timeline:

1. **BEFORE** the “nations rise against nations, earthquakes, famines, plagues in various places, and terrifying sights and signs from heaven” the disciples will be “persecuted, hated, and some killed”
2. While some of the disciples are alive, they are going to witness Jerusalem surrounded by armies, laid desolate, the temple torn apart, and the Gentiles overrunning Jerusalem.
 - a. So in the next few decades of this prediction these things are going to happen
3. There is an *undefined period* when the Gentiles will control Jerusalem (the Times of the Gentiles)
4. **BEFORE** the Return of Jesus and the end of the Times of the Gentiles, Israel will come back to life!
5. The **Time of the Gentiles** will end with signs in the heavens, earthquakes, famines, etc. followed by the Return of Jesus.

YOU

What does this mean for us?

First, I want you to be a student of the Scriptures!

- What we did, you should do whenever you study the Bible!
- Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?
- You have the Holy Spirit, so do your research **BEFORE** reading your favorite Bible teacher or a commentary on the verses.

Second, a straightforward walkthrough of Jesus' teaching shows we are in the last days!

- We are waiting for the **return of Jesus!**
- We are in the **Times of the Gentiles**

What are We supposed to do while we wait?

Luke 21:34-36 “Be on your guard, so that your minds are not dulled from *scrolling mindlessly through social media, spending hours playing video games, your face glued to the phone, playing with AI on the internet, watching pornography...*

“**Be on your guard**, so that your minds are not dulled from *carousing (partying), drunkenness (drugs or anything that controls you), and worries of life (focusing only on the here and now), or that day will come on you*

unexpectedly 35 like a trap. For **it** will come on all who live on the face of the whole earth.

- What's "That day"? The return of Christ!

36 But be alert 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."

According to Jesus you are going to need "strength to escape all these things that are going to take place"

- **Don't worry pastor**, we are all going to be RAPTURED before Jesus returns!
 - *Jesus never mentions a rapture!*
 - Don't you think He would mention that we will be RAPTURED before these things take place?
 - Why does Jesus tell us to "Pray that we may have strength to escape all these things?"
 - Why does Jesus tell us to "Pray that we may have strength to stand before the Son of Man?"

There is much more to unpack in this passage....

Are You Ready for the Return of Christ?