

**Home : Sermons : February 4, 2007**

Days of Vengeance (part II) – Luke 21:20-38

Introduction – This is one of those sermons where, if you did not hear last week’s sermon, it would be a good idea to get the CD (or listen on our website). In it, I mentioned that I believe Luke 21, corresponding with all of Scripture, puts forth a postmillennial and preterist view of eschatology. It is important to remember the beginning of this passage as we move into the second half.

Remember the Question (v7) - When Jesus tells the disciples that the Temple will be leveled, they respond with this question: “...when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?” Jesus says that when you see Jerusalem surrounded, you will know that the time has come (v20), and He explicitly says that “all things” He has spoken about will take place in this generation (v32).

Signs that Must Take Place First (vv8-19) – This section describes the kinds of things which will take place before Jerusalem is surrounded by armies (v20), before the desolation (v21), and before the days of vengeance (v22), when “all things which are written may be fulfilled.” We saw how these prophecies (vv8-19) should be seen as fulfilled in historical events recorded by historians prior to the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

“When Will These Things Be?” (vv20-21) – The “desolation” that will take place will occur when those followers of Christ see Jerusalem surrounded by armies (v20). At that time, those who are in Jerusalem should flee and those who are near her should not enter (v21), something which Josephus says explicitly was done by the Christians before the final siege in 68 AD.

Days of Vengeance (vv22-24) – Jesus had quoted most of Isaiah 61:1-2 at the opening of His public ministry, declaring it fulfilled in their presence (Luke 4:16-21). Now, at His final public sermon, Jesus declares the end of Isaiah 61:2 as well (along with alluding to Daniel 9, 10, 11 – see Mark 13:14). The “times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled as Rome brings her destruction upon the Temple. During that siege, Josephus records that there was such famine that even cannibalism was committed in the city (i.e. Wars VI, iii 4).

Signs in the Heavens (vv25-28) – Christians struggle to apply these signs to the first century because they refuse to interpret these signs the way the Old Testament presents them. How could these events take place “in this generation?” Jesus is using standard prophetic imagery to describe the collapse of a world-system. The sun and moon are set in the heavens to rule (Gen 1:16-18), and throughout the Scriptures the sun and moon represent rulers (Isaiah 13:9-10, Ezek 32:7-8, Joel 2:31, 3:15). The sea in verse 25 draws imagery from the OT as well. Israel is pictured as land in the midst of the Gentile sea (e.g. 2 Sam 22:4-5, Psalm 65:7, Isaiah 17:12-13, Dan 7:2-3), and there was great turmoil in the Gentile world at this time. Nero committed suicide in 68 AD, and four emperors followed in quick succession – it was the end of the *pax Romana*.

The Coming of the Son of Man – Jesus is quoting from Daniel 7:13-14, where the Son of Man ascends to the Ancient of Days to receive all the dominion that had belonged to the Gentile empires of the ancient world. How will this be seen, since it will be occurring in heaven? It is seen, or perceived, when Jerusalem is destroyed as Jesus predicts.

A Eucatastrophe (v28) – This term, coined by Tolkien, refers to a catastrophe which takes place that actually brings about the vindication of the protagonist in the story. Jesus seems to be saying something similar here – even though this catastrophe is coming, when you, my faithful followers, see it coming, lift up your heads (Psalm 24:10ff) for the King of glory has come to His throne and the new kingdom is reigning.

Learning from the Fig Tree (vv29-33) – When the trees are budding, you know that a particular time is near. Remember the question they asked (v7), remember the context in which Jesus answers (v20, 22), remember the historical accounts of the generation which ended in 70AD and hear the words of Jesus, “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.” Considering all of this, it really does not seem that difficult to interpret this verse quite naturally.

Heaven and Earth (v33) – A new heavens and a new earth were established in this new reign as well. The old ways will pass away, but the words of Christ will never pass away. He was good to His word.

Faithful Warnings (vv34-38) – Here, Jesus gives the warning to that generation amidst His promise to care for them in the midst of the trials. The warning is that they not become presumptuous, that they not fall into nominalism or do-good-ism, which were the sins of Israel. Remember how this discussion began (v 5). Israel had all the trappings of the external Temple and it looked as if they were under a great blessing. But they did not have true religion for they did not have Christ. Years later, Paul

would warn the Gentile Christians in Rome to not be haughty, for if God could cut out the natural branches, He certainly could cut out those who had been grafted in.

The Lesson for All Christians – There is nothing lost in the importance of these teachings of Jesus when we see that they were fulfilled in the generation that heard the prophesy. Jesus is proven to be a faithful prophet, and the warnings still apply to us today. When we fall into nominalism (Christian-by-name-only) or think we have somehow merited the favor of God through our good works, we deny the gospel and covenantal judgment begins to fall upon a people. The living faith you have received by grace makes you a spiritual stone in the New Temple, whose chief cornerstone is Jesus Christ. And this Temple will last forever.

Dave Hatcher – February 4, 2007