

Jesus, Lord of Judgement and Salvation

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles now for our reading this evening. And Josh, as you know, has been preaching through Luke's gospel. And we've come to chapter 21. And if you need a Bible, if you don't have your Bible with you, there's some at the side, some red Bibles, some at the back, put up your hand, go and grab one. Somebody would be glad to give one to you so you can follow along.

Think in those Bibles. It's about page 880. And we're going to read from chapter 21 of Luke's gospel, beginning at verse 5 to the end of the chapter. And Luke says, while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he, that's Jesus said, as for these things that you see, the day will come when there 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, watch that you're 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 are of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place. But the end will not be at once.

And then he said to them, nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There'll be great earthquakes, 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 synagogues and prisons. And you'll be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness and settle it therefore on your minds, not to meditate beforehand, how to answer. I will give your mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. And 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.

[2 : 4 6] But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. And 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 the 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'll 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, by the nations, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

And there will be signs in the 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 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. Look at the fig tree and all the trees.

As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and you 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.

[4 : 29] 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 as 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.

And every day he was teaching in the temple. But at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. And early in the morning, all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

Amen. May God bless us, his word, and help us understand its message for us today. May God bless you, his word, and help us understand its message for us today.

[6 : 07] Let every single one of us here in this gathering face. That a day is coming when this world will be changed forever, but we can so readily be distracted from that.

Wade down with other things so that it catches us unawares. And can become a day of dread judgment instead of delightful redemption.

We've been seeing in our last three studies in Luke that Jesus is the triumphant king comes his city. This began with the triumphal entry of Jesus on a colt.

And it carries through to our passage here that ends with the next structural marker in verses 37 and 38. Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem led to ongoing teaching in the temple.

And throughout this block of Luke's teaching about Jesus the king are the implications that there will be for the temple. This passage is the climax of Luke's message about the triumphant arrival of Jesus the king.

[7 : 15] And it amplifies that triumph. And it also amplifies the turmoil facing the temple. You can see there in verse 27 that the culmination of Jesus' triumphant arrival will not be seen on Jesus arriving on a colt, but on a cloud.

The king who will come in power and glory. That day is coming. And it will change everything forever. But Jesus is clear that many things in this world will seek to distract us from that reality.

Because it is not yet, verse 9. The end will not be at once. And so we have to reckon with the as yet unseen reality of heaven and hell.

And that is a perpetual struggle to be clear-sighted, clear-headed about the urgency of being prepared for that day. And not being weighed down by the other things that there are in this life.

And so it will require, according to verse 34, us watching ourselves. Verse 36, being awake. And so the ultimate horizon in view in this passage is the day of great judgment.

[8 : 31] The last day, which is also the day of great salvation. But the reality is that the great judgment that is to come is also foreshadowed in history.

It's shadow, it's pattern, it shines backwards into history. So that when real judgments do take place in this world, they are a type of the judgment to come.

And they'll share something of the character of the judgment that is to come. And so there is another horizon in this passage. Not just the last great day. Jesus speaks of the impending judgment also that Jerusalem was going to face.

And indeed did face in history some 40 years after Jesus spoke of it. Do you see? Verse 5, that is where Jesus begins.

Some were marveling at the temple and its noble stones. And in truth, it was worth marveling at. It's hard for us to quite conceive of just how staggering and astonishing the temple was.

[9 : 37] Some of the Bible dictionaries explain that the smallest of the stones, that made up the temple weighed somewhere between 2 and 15 tons, the smallest ones.

The biggest stone was thought to weigh some 415 tons, apparently measuring 46 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet. A stone nearly eight times my height, weighing nearly twice my weight, or perhaps a little bit more.

And the temple was adorned with offerings because it was the heart and soul of Israel's faith. Indeed, their entire life, their world, their everything.

But look at what Jesus says, verse 6. Days will come when one stone will not be left upon another. Just as he said back in chapter 19, verse 43.

Jesus predicted, indeed proclaimed, judgment and destruction both physically and spiritually. And we've seen, haven't we, Luke, that Jesus can do wonderful and remarkable things with stones.

[10 : 43] He could have them praise him if nobody else would. He can raise up from stones, sons for Abraham. But he can also pull down the mightiest of stones to the ground.

And he will. But that won't just be a display of raw power in this world. It's going to be a display of redemptive power in judging the very establishment, the very institution that has opposed his ministry at every turn, that refuses to repent, and that ultimately, as we've seen in the parable of the tenants in the vineyard, would kill God's own son.

Such destruction of the temple would have triggered thoughts of the last day for Jews in the first century, because the temple was so very much at the heart of Israel's religion. And that's what's behind the questions in verse 7.

Some ask him, when will this take place? And what will the sign be that this is coming? What's the sign of this monumental event? But Jesus is clear in this passage that these are going to be separate events.

There are two horizons in view. Yes, the temple. And he'll come on to that in verses 20 to 24. But then separately, the last day. Verses 25 to 28.

[12 : 08] And regarding both of these horizons, Jesus wanted to make clear that neither one was to happen at once, verse 9. And so, for his hearers, there was waiting.

Waiting for the destruction of Jerusalem, and then more waiting for the last day. And for us, they're still waiting for the last day, isn't there?

And so, before getting to signs and timing, Jesus wants to prepare his people for that wait. And so, we see firstly in verses 5 to 19, the pattern until the day of judgment.

The pattern until the day of judgment. For Jesus' followers, life in this age will be marked by opposition and opportunity until and only until Jesus returns.

And so, in this age, where Jesus has ascended to reign at the right hand of the Father, where he waits to return in power and glory, in this age of waiting, Jesus makes clear, verse 19, that we will have need of endurance.

[13 : 17] Endurance will be needed because this age will be marked by, verses 8 to 11, deception. Deception. There will be no shortage of so-called and supposed Bible teachers and prophets, the kind that pop up on YouTube, the kind that social media algorithms push in many people's directions.

Those who will prove to be a terrible distraction, forecasting doom, always declaring signs that show the end is upon us. But it's interesting, isn't it, that the first thing Jesus says here about the last day is that we mustn't be deceived.

And the main deception here is around claims that, verse 8, I am he. That is, false Christ. People claim an authority that can only be Jesus's. But also because they're saying the time is at hand.

It's not uncommon to hear misguided preachers or sects claiming Jesus is returning on a specific date, or to hear them point to any and every evil and disaster in the world as evidence that Jesus is about to come back, that it must be upon us.

But it's interesting, isn't it, in verse 9, that when we hear of wars and rumors of wars and tumults, what does that mean? Well, I don't know about you, but usually when I hear that phrase, it's accompanied by someone saying, Jesus must be coming back right now, that his return is imminent.

[14 : 43] But look at verse 9. It's actually the opposite. When you hear of wars, of which we hear of more and more, when things kick off in Ukraine and Israel and Iran and all the other unreported places, Jesus says, Do not be terrified.

They're not the sign of Jesus' imminent return. The end will not be at once. Don't be deceived by the charlatans. And do not be deceived because of discord and disaster.

Do you see? Jesus says these things have to happen. They must take place. Verse 10. Nation will rise against nation. There will be earthquakes and disasters and great signs from heaven.

Why? Because creation groans under the curse. Don't be shaken by those who whip up a frenzy and say that because the world is falling apart, that we're on the cusp of the apocalypse.

These are the regular and normal patterns of this world that is stained and tainted by the ongoing power and presence of sin. They must happen because Jesus hasn't yet returned.

[15 : 56] The world hasn't yet been made right. It hasn't realized its redemption. And so it isn't that we're to welcome these signs and rejoice in them, but we mustn't be shaken by them.

Jesus says they must take place, which means his sovereign and kingly hand is over them. There is an odd sense of peace in that, isn't there?

Expect wars and tumults. Expect disasters. Expect deceivers. That doesn't sound very reassuring at first, except that they aren't happening outside of Jesus' control.

They aren't a surprise to him. And so when the next prime minister or crackpot dictator heads off on some procession of stupidity or worse, that isn't a sign that the world has reached total and disordered and unrestrained chaos.

But rather that word must in verse nine tells us that for all the seeming bedlam in this world, there is a restraining hand at play, the controlling hand of the divine will of God.

[17 : 03] And it can be easy for us to lose sight of that, to lose sight of where this world is heading. We can get caught up in sensationalist predictions, caught up in a sense of despair about the state of our world.

And I know that that seems to be getting easier and easier. When you look at the state of our country, you see the feckless politicians are meant to be leading us, ineffectual and worse.

But these things mustn't cause us to lose sight of where history is heading. These things aren't obstacles to Jesus' grand purpose for the world. They must happen.

They're part of this age. And they point to what will be undone at the great day of the Lord. And so endurance will be needed for that.

But secondly, endurance will be needed because Jesus' followers in this age, verses 12 to 19, will face discrimination and death. Discrimination and death.

[18 : 01] The normal experience for Jesus' followers is to be under pressure, intense pressure. Verse 12, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. And notice the chilling words here.

Jesus says his followers will be delivered up to two places, prison and the synagogues. Remember what we've just been seeing in John's gospel.

John 16 tells us, indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. Jesus' followers will be discriminated against, made examples of, and all in the name of supposedly doing what is good and right and righteous.

Or so they'll think. I just read an article in the paper this week about Israel Folau, a terrific Australian rugby player, world class, best in his position.

But he's been erased from Australian rugby history. The record of him scrubbed out. He'd been sacked. Why? Because the terribly moral rugby Australia, who have great principles of inclusion that it wanted to uphold as a bastion of righteousness in the world, well, they couldn't stand by when Israel Folau dared post a Bible verse on Instagram that kicked against progressivism.

[19 : 26] When he stated orthodox Christian beliefs, he was sacked and scrubbed out. All in the name of righteousness. Or so they think.

Or again, I read of a Church of England minister who has been disciplined and prevented from ministering. Why? Because he dared to challenge establishment religion, which really just apes the culture we live in.

And indeed, I'm sure in this very room, there will be example after example of the pressure, the hatred, the injustice that Jesus' people will experience in this world.

And sometimes at the hands of those who claim to be on the side of God and righteousness, the synagogues. Well, friends, Jesus is aware of it.

He knows. He knows when we're summoned before the powers that be in this world, before the kings and governors, the courts, the tribunals. He knows because verse 12, it's for his namesake.

[20 : 27] Verse 17, we'll be hated by all for his namesake. And that pressure can mount, can't it? It can come at us in very painful ways.

It can distract us from the great day of the Lord. Because how painful it is when family, verse 16, family are the people we're delivered up to and who pile this pressure upon us and would want to squeeze the faith out of us.

And the pressure, Jesus says, may even be the kind of pressure that leads to death. That's no little thing, is it? And yet Christian history is littered with stories of believers who have been pleased to accept such a fate.

What a thing that might be for us to pray for one another. Verse 36 says, keep awake and pray for strength. What a thing it might be for us to pray for one another that for Jesus' namesake, we would as a church family be prepared to accept discrimination, to accept death, even, were it required.

Well, friends, with that made clear, boy, do we need endurance. Don't we? We're not robots. These things sting, don't they?

[21 : 54] They discourage. But Jesus does also give us three encouragements that will foster such endurance. Will foster such endurance. until the last day, he says, he will give opportunity to us.

Verses 12 to 13. He will give opportunity to us. When we are forced before authorities, that will be the opportunity to witness.

Verse 13. The discrimination, the hatred in this world is not an obstacle to effective witness and ministry in this world. It's the opportunity for it.

When we cannot abide by the ways of this world. When our commitment to Jesus, our loyalty to him, above all else, lands us in hot water. That is not a failure of our witness, but the beginning of it.

I wonder if we all believe that this evening. That in the white, hot heat of the hatred that this world has for its rightful king and his people, if we really think that that is the opportunity for witness.

[23 : 05] Or if really we think we'd be in a better position to witness, if only we're respectable in this world. If only we win a hearing by being so very winsome. It was supposed that Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, coined the phrase that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

And it is the typical experience that where the church is enduring great persecution, that there, there, the church is growing fastest. There will be no better opportunity in our lives to proclaim Jesus and to show his worth than when we are forced to give an answer about him and why we won't conform.

For we will have nothing to speak of but Jesus and why we cannot possibly bow to anyone else but him. That reality is in evidence all the way through Acts.

Think of Acts chapter 6. Opposition rose up to Stephen's ministry and it gave him a captive audience for his great speech. Acts 5. The apostles continued to preach when they were told not to.

They were summoned to explain themselves and they explained themselves by declaring the supremacy of Jesus. And their number increased. Jesus promises that when this world seeks to stifle our faith, our message, our ministry, Jesus promises that that very stifling will actually provide an audience, a platform, an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus.

[24 : 39] But he doesn't only promise opportunity because secondly, he also says that he himself will enable us. Verses 14 to 15. We might think that opportunity at such a time is the worst timing imaginable.

Amidst the pressure and stress of such persecution and discrimination, how on earth would we be able to coherently and convincingly proclaim the gospel? Well, look at verse 15.

Jesus promises that in such scenarios, he will undertake for us. He will enable us. He will give a mouth and wisdom.

So much so that he says, verse 14, we don't even need to sit and draw up a cue card for such a scenario because Jesus has promised his spirit.

Remember that back in chapter 12? He's promised his spirit to us and he will help us really and truly in such circumstances with a help that notice verse 15 will be irresistible.

[25 : 38] We will be given opportunity but also we'll be given a mouth and wisdom when we're faithful to Jesus amidst the fire.

He will see to it that we will bear fruit. But finally, final encouragement, he'll preserve us, verse 18. He'll preserve us.

Now I think Jesus puts this in quite stark and even jarring language to heighten its impact upon us. So notice the apparent contradiction. Verse 16, you'll be delivered up and some of you will be put to death but, verse 18, not a hair of your head will perish.

That almost seems nonsensical, doesn't it? Listen to one commentator who says, remember, chapter 12, verse 4, don't fear those, said Jesus, who kill the body and after that have nothing more they can do.

That's it. How frustrating for them. They can kill you but they can't make you extinct. So here, they may put you to death and yet, not a hair of your head will perish.

[26 : 53] I think Jesus sometimes uses paradox because he wants us to think and what a tremendous reassurance this is. It seems to be a promise of complete redemption. and resurrection.

And so he concludes, there is just a certain indestructibility that Jesus gives his people in face of whatever they encounter. They will be preserved.

He will preserve us. And so until the day of judgment, Jesus says, verse 19, by your endurance you will gain your lives. But even that endurance will be Jesus wrought helping us all the way through.

Well, we see then secondly, verses 20 to 28, predictions regarding the day of judgment. The predictions regarding the day of judgment. And Jesus makes clear that there was to be a real judgment in history upon the temple and that at the climax of history there would be a judgment upon the whole world.

Jesus is now turning to answer the question from verse 7. When will judgment fall in the temple? What are the signs? And he deals firstly with the temple in verses 20 to 24 before then dealing separately with the last days in verses 25 to 28.

[28 : 13] So first, the judgment on the temple. Jesus has spoken of this throughout Luke's gospel. He said back in chapter 13, Behold, your house is forsaken.

He spoke of it in chapter 19. Days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and tear you down to the ground. Jerusalem, Israel, those who supposedly cherished the temple had every privilege imaginable.

Prophet after prophet had warned them. They'd spoken the very word of God to them. But they'd refused it again and again and again. They'd even had a second Elijah in the form of John the Baptist, the greatest of all the prophets.

And they wouldn't heed him. They've had grace and patience and abundance. And then they have God's own son in their midst pleading with them. And yet, chapter 20, verse 19, they sought to lay hands on him to kill him.

And so Jesus makes it abundantly clear that judgment begins at the household of God. That was the message of many a prophet. Peter says the same thing. And a glorious temple and a rich heritage and a wonderful reputation won't grant a free pass when it comes to hearing and heeding and hoping in the word of God.

[29 : 45] It won't remove the need for repentance and faith in the face of Jesus the King. Verse 20, Jerusalem was going to be surrounded by armies.

And when it is, then you will know that desolation has come. Jesus predicted a day when armies would surround a great temple and city and would eventually raise it to the ground.

And he says when the army musters, that's the sign to flee because disaster is coming. Verse 21. And he says that all of this was to happen to fulfill the covenant curses of all that's written in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

Now, this judgment wasn't even going to fall instantly after Jesus' death. God's patience is remarkable. even though Jesus was the king they'll have crucified.

Right now, he's still gearing up his followers to hold out the truth about him, to continue to witness to him. There would still be a period of time after his death for Israel to repent.

- [30 : 52] But alas, we knew that while some did repent, as we see in the book of Acts, as a nation, as a whole nation, they did not. And so even with great patience being shown after they'd murdered the Son of God, they still do not repent.

And so all that can happen is this desolation that Jesus speaks of. A desolation that again was foretold by the prophets, by Daniel. And there, on that day, Jerusalem will be handed over to the Gentiles.

Heed these words, says Jesus. Verse 21, flee when you see that coming. Flee the wrath that is to come. For that's what it is. It's wrath. Verse 23, if you don't listen and don't flee, well then, there can be no rescue, no salvation.

Don't think it won't happen. But even amidst all this, notice the characteristic compassion of Jesus. Amidst the grave warning, Jesus has a note of compassion for the hapless pregnant women.

The nursing mothers caught up in the midst of all of this, whose escape will be difficult. verse 23, verse 23, ever compassionate. But nonetheless, these words are so very solemn.

- [32 : 12] This was the people of God's choosing, his special people, and yet even they with their glorious temple are not beyond having God's presence depart, not beyond having his preserving presence depart from them.

And you know, that is a very chastening word to any church today, isn't it? Any church that bears the name of Jesus. We too must heed and listen and not think that this couldn't possibly happen, God's not going to do this.

We must never take Jesus' words lightly. His gospel word, his rule, is never a suggestion, it's a command. But a command given with immense grace and patience.

Now even amidst all this calamity, there is a note of hope. Verse 24, Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Jerusalem's conquering will be a means of the gospel going forth to the world, to the nations, to the Gentiles. Paul certainly says that in Romans 11 that the hardening of the Jews serves to see a great response to the gospel by Gentiles so that there will be a period of prominence for Gentiles.

- [33 : 29] And so that is a great hope for the world in this. Judgment upon Israel prompts the gospel going global. Salvation to the ends of the world. But there is also a note of hope for Israel itself here.

Jesus says Jerusalem will be trampled until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Hinting that perhaps there may be more to Jerusalem's story and Israel's story.

A significant restoration of sorts. That again was certainly Paul's hope in Romans 11. But either way, when the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled, when they have had a period of receiving the gospel, when they have had opportunity to receive grace, to experience God's immense patience, well then the end can come and it will come.

Just as this came to Jerusalem. And that's what Jesus turns to in verses 25 to 28. He clearly moves on in verse 25 to speak of events that are more cosmic in nature.

He speaks of sun and moon and stars and the whole earth. And notice he speaks of the distress of nations. the same word used in verse 24 of the Gentiles.

- [34 : 45] And so Jesus is speaking of the great day of the Lord, the last judgment here, a judgment that will stretch not just to Jerusalem and the temple but over this whole world, the whole earth, all nations.

It will touch everything. And such an occurrence will rightly raise questions and perplexity about what on earth is happening. It will be a day of great distress.

It will be marked by verse 26 a great shaking. And shaking is often associated with the day of the Lord. Haggai speaks of that. Hebrews does too. And so the point here is I think that nobody will miss it.

Jesus has already said he will come like flash of lightning. It will be obvious and inescapable. But look at Jesus' words. Yes, it will be dramatic. It will be cosmically significant.

For on that day, at last, verse 27, the Son of Man will come on the clouds. He'll come in great power and glory to claim the throne and the rule that was prophesied for him in Daniel.

[35 : 52] But do you see in amongst that the note of encouragement? Verse 28, when these signs appear, when it becomes apparent that it is the time that Jesus is coming back, take heart, lift up your head.

Why? Because your redemption is drawing near. Jesus makes clear the future for his disciples and for us. The awful murder of Jesus would result in judgment on the temple and in vindication for Jesus through that.

But there would also come a day when a final judgment would happen. and so a final vindication would happen for Jesus and for his people so that finally, at last, we can be all that we're meant to be, set free from the enslaving power of sin, set free from the groaning pains of this world.

Jesus is saying, take heed. Real judgments in history are not the final judgment, but they do point to it. but those who heed Jesus have no need to fear that day.

That will be the day that they cannot last lift up their dripping heads and have their weak knees strengthened. For redemption will have arrived fully, finally, and forever. Amidst the distress in the world, there will be delight for the church.

[37 : 20] At the end of the era of opportunity and opposition will come glorious redemption. Everything made right. And because that is so cosmically significant, we must be prepared for that day.

So that, verse 19, we do endure and so gain our lives. And so that we do taste, verse 28, redemption. And so that's how Jesus finishes.

He speaks in 29 to 38 of preparation for the day of judgment. Preparation for the day of judgment. The absolute certainty of Jesus' return in power and glory demands that we are alert and awake to its coming and so are not caught out and feel to escape the judgment that is to come.

Notice those two concluding words from Jesus. Verse 34, watch yourselves. Verse 36, stay awake, be ready, be prepared. And so Jesus tells his followers in the parable of the fig tree to read the signs.

Perhaps he is returning to the signs about the destruction of Jerusalem. After all, the fig tree is a common image for Israel. Verse 30, when the fig leaves come out, you can see that summer is here.

[38 : 39] And so verse 31, when you see the armies surround Jerusalem, you know it's time to flee and get out of there. You've been forewarned. Don't wait around with some misguided hope that God won't really withdraw his presence and his blessing.

When he's told you to flee and said very clearly that Jerusalem's fate is destruction, don't fail to listen. Read the signs. It is possible for Christians and for churches to kid themselves sometimes, isn't it?

We're the Tron Church. You know the ministers we've had, very well known, very well respected. We're a special church. God will not easily abandon us.

Look at all of our buildings. Look at our resource. Look at the ministry we've had. Well friends, as if that's ever the sort of thing we're saying and thinking, that is the way of folly and disaster.

For truly in history, the mightiest of buildings, the most historic and privileged of institutions, the temple, was indeed left as rubble at the hands of the Roman army in AD 70.

[39 : 48] But notice too the scoop of this. because whether the warning of the fig tree is limited to Jerusalem or whether it speaks of the last great day, look at Jesus' application of the parable.

When these things happen, verse 31, the kingdom of God is near. And he's been clear throughout Luke's gospel that it has come near in his own ministry. And it still comes near today in the preaching of the gospel.

And so verse 32, this generation, he says, will not pass away until all this has taken place. Now, whilst the free as this generation could refer to those who would face judgment in AD 70, I think it speaks beyond that.

Because we've seen before, haven't we, that in Luke's gospel, the free as this generation isn't talking about a moment in history, but rather it's making a moral comment. It's speaking of those who refuse God and reject his word.

So Jesus is saying that this generation, verse 32, those who refuse God and reject his word will not escape the judgment of the last day. In fact, verse 33, it's so certain that there's more chance of heaven and earth passing away than escape it.

[41 : 04] Even if this whole world seems to have fallen into total disorder and chaos, right will be made right for God is God. Even if it seems like all evil is prospering and running riot, Jesus speaks with absolute certainty about what will happen.

This generation, those who reject God and his word, will not pass away until the great day of judgment has come. They won't escape it. And so with such certainty, Jesus gives comfort and hope to his embattled saints, to those who are witnessing amidst the warfare, to those who are given opportunity amidst opposition.

There's comfort in this. Redemption is coming. Judgment is coming. God is coming. But he does also lay a challenge before his own people. Verses 34 to 36.

He's saying, watch yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness. Watch yourselves, that your mind doesn't become clouded, that you don't become foggy in your thinking about the last day, like a drunk.

Jesus is saying we must be clear headed about what is coming. We need to exercise our minds towards that day. I wonder how many of us do things on a regular basis that are aimed at preserving our health for the long run, brushing our teeth twice a day to keep them and protect them, perhaps doing stretches for dodgy backs, make them less debilitating twice a day or more, perhaps dragging ourselves out of bed early to get to the gym and all manner of things like this.

[42 : 47] Well, similarly, we don't want our hearts and our minds to be flabby when it comes to seeing clearly about the last day. We need to consciously and regularly set the unseen realities of heaven and hell in our minds, to exercise our minds, to maintain clarity, not blurry drunkenness.

Because notice again verse 34, the cares of this life can very easily overtake eternity, weigh us down. The nappies that need to be changed, the washing that needs to be done, the bills that need to be paid, the groceries that need to be bought, the admin that needs to be sorted, the food that needs to be cooked, the job that needs to be done, the paycheck earned, the spouse to be found, the holiday to be booked, the family to be cared for and visited, and on and on and on.

All good and right concerns, noble things to be busy with, but all with the potential to weigh down our hearts so that the great day of judgment arrives like a trap and catches us unawares.

And we cannot afford to be unclear here. Verse 35, it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the earth. Jesus will return in power and glory.

That is more certain than heaven and earth continuing. It will come to all, some to judgment, some to salvation. And so with that in mind, there is only one thing that we can do, that is to be prepared for it.

[44 : 24] Jesus is clear. It's going to require effort. Watch yourself, stay awake, he says, praying that you may have strength to escape it. And so you see, it is possible to escape judgment, to taste redemption.

But there is only one way to do so. Notice where Luke finishes this section off, verse 37 and 38. Every day Jesus was teaching, and each morning people came to hear him.

That's what matters. What will we do with Jesus' words? Will we hear and heed and hope in them? Will we flee as he tells us, flee to him?

Will our lives be marked by repentance and faith, pleased to cling on to his outstretched hand that offers peace and grace to us? When he does return, will Jesus say to us, away from me, I never knew you, for you were workers of lawlessness?

us? Or will we build our lives and so our eternities on the one who can knock down these noble stones, but indeed on the one who can roll away great stones from the tomb of death because he's conquered it and because he promises redemption.

[45 : 45] There is a great day that is to come. Jesus is clear on that. It can either be a day of dread judgment or the day when redemption draws near. But he says to us, the end will not be at once, so watch yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down by the cares of this life and that day come upon you suddenly, like a trap.

Let's pray. O Lord, how we need your help. Help us by your spirit and in your grace, grant us the steel that we need in our spines to face the hatred of this world.

And grant us the trust in your help that we would be effective witnesses and fix in our minds and in our affections the wonder of the day when indeed redemption will draw near.

And so help us, we ask, to be stubbornly immovable from reaching that day prepared. And help us to help one another to that end.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.